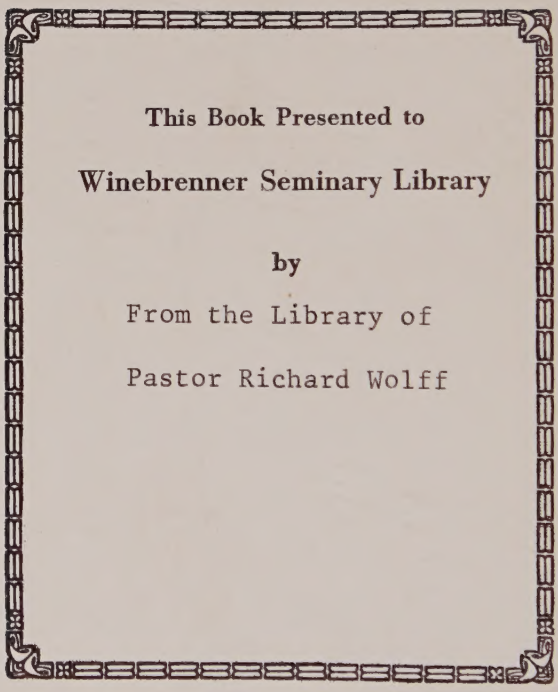
THE MERCY *of* HELL

Joseph Fort Newton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THE MERCY OF HELL

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

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PUBLISHERS' FOREWORD

This volume owes its existence to the belief that Joseph Fort Newton is one of the few living preachers who have a universal message. He lives beyond dogma and above controversy, companioned by Him, "whose we are, in whom we live, and in the service of whose wise will there is peace."

Because this book is a witness of The Unseen, its message is to all who seek where they do not yet see.

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I

THE MERCY OF HELL

"And in hell he lifted up his eyes."—*Luke* 16:23.

SO terrible a theme casts over one the hush of a great awe. Too often those who discuss it do so as advocates of this side or that, keen to make out their case. Whereas it is too solemn and fearful to be used for dogma, much less as a ready expedient to terrify, and still less to drive away those whom the preacher has not the skill, the patience, the sympathy to win. Let all such thoughts be far from us to-day, as we seek to inquire into the issues of the moral life.

Strangely enough this theme, once so popular, has almost vanished from the pulpit. So much so that it is seldom named. The place where the reality of hell is preached most vividly to-day is in the hall of science, with its vision of inexorable law. Outside that temple, the man in our day who has taught it with most terrible intensity of insight, making men view with uncovered eyes the uncovered horror, is Henrik Ibsen. It is startling to pass from the theology of our day, often only a confection of rose-water sentiment — not to

name the current denial of the reality of sin — into the air of the Ibsen stage. There we are made to behold the facts of the moral life in the light of a profound and authentic insight, and without disguise.

Such teaching seems unduly severe to our easy-going and indulgent age, not a little given to flippant talk about the most serious things. Many think that with the passing of the crude idea of literal fire burning unburnable spirits, hell has been done away with. Not so. As a fact, hell, in the sense of inevitable and unmistakable punishment for sin, or rather by sin, is to-day more a reality than ever before. Whatever may be the sufferings through which men must go in the future, there is no question about the sufferings we undergo in this present life. That man was right who, when asked if he believed in hell, replied: "No, I do not believe in it, I know it, because I am in it." This awful reality has been put off into the dim future, whereas, like heaven, it begins on earth and goes with us into the beyond.

To-day the fact of hell gets its most tragic aspect from the truth that men who are in it are often unconscious that they are in a place of torment. Sad beyond tears is the sight of moral decay, the deadening of moral sensibilities, and blinding of moral vision, and the slow degradation of soul into which, imperceptibly, men sink. It is this inward hell which each man makes for him-

self that is so terrible. Men go to hell, not because they are sent there by divine fiat, but because they choose to go. They go by a law of their own natures, as surely as harvest follows sowing, as certainly as night follows day. It does not lie beyond the open doors of death; it is here. It begins the moment a man sins and continues as long as he is in sin, here or otherwhere. To be in hell and not know it, happy and contented there — that is the ultimate moral tragedy.

Fear of hell is one of the great influences under which man has been educated, and it is rooted in his primary moral instincts. Consider the facts. We have, as psychology discloses, an infallible memory below the surface of the mind, keeping record of all that we have thought, dreamed, said, and done. We have also a moral judgment relentless in its accuracy and insight. We have, besides, a developing nature. Given these three things, and nothing else is needed to make a hell more terrible than Dante dreamed in his darkest mood. Once there is an awakening, and the thoughts and acts of days agone rise up like the citizens of a sleeping city. Then a man sees his brutality set in the light, remembers every look of pain, every tear he has caused, all the tragedy and sorrow which he failed to notice before. As in a drama, which he must sit and see out, he beholds the shame of his life in the light of what he might have been! What cycle of the Inferno could be more terrify-

ing than to witness that tragedy pass and repass!

Such an awakening is sure to come at last, if not here, then beyond. Some pass through this life like the rich man in the parable, thoughtless and indifferent, carelessly taking toll of unresisting love, inflicting suffering, perpetuating injustice; but those things all come back to them in the end. During his lifetime the rich man did not see the beggar at his gate, covered with sores and attended by dogs; but in hell he lifted up his eyes, and then he could see Lazarus afar off. His eyes were opened at last. Too late he saw how brutal, selfish, and unfeeling he had been to a fellow man in dire plight. No wonder he was in torment, and in his misery he became a beggar, asking mercy of one for whom he had no mercy in life. This is hell — not the painted flame that flickers in the evasive talk of our time, but the very thing itself.

Unhappily, this awful hell, real and terrible beyond all words, has too often been made, not simply salutary in its warning and effects, but almost savage, by three frightful errors. First, it has been portrayed in lurid rhetoric as a punishment inflicted by God in anger, and sometimes almost in a glee of vengeance. So blasphemous an idea of God, instead of serving the purpose intended, often made Him whom men should love and serve a Being whom it were an act of worship to despise. Volumes could not tell the injury done to religion

by such a caricature of the Infinite Father revealed in the life of One who was love and mercy, who forgave the vilest sinner when he gave up his evil way and turned to the light. As a method of making not simply agnostics, but ribald atheists, no better plan was ever devised.

In the life of Harriet Beecher Stowe we read of an evening, after the second marriage of her father, when the family sat about the fire reading. The book was a volume of the works of Jonathan Edwards, and it happened to be the famous sermon with the pungent title, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Harriet was curled up on the sofa, apparently listening, but really watching the face of her new mother. She saw an expression of horror and abhorrence on her face — a bright red spot every moment growing redder. Finally, rising to her stately height, the good woman swept out of the room, saying as she went:

"Mr. Beecher, I will not listen to another word! Why, it is horrible! It is a slander on the character of my Heavenly Father! I will not hear it!"

Never did Harriet forget that scene, and the expression of stupefaction on the face of her father. A boy named Henry was also listening, and in his after years he toiled nobly to erase from the minds of men that ghastly dogma. Yet Edwards was a noble and gracious man, by far the greatest thinker this land has known, and nothing

was further from his thought than to mar faith, much less becloud it. He was better than his theology, more merciful than the God whom he portrayed as an avenging fury torturing those whom He was unable to win. God is indeed a consuming fire, but if He be God at all it is a fire of Love, not only pure, but purifying in its purpose and power.

Hence the second blunder of thinking of the punishment of hell as heartless, hopeless, and everlasting. Our faith in the sovereignty of Infinite Love rises up against anything hopeless in a world God-made and ruled. As for the word Eternal, the Bible nowhere uses it as we use it — in the sense of extending time into eternity. By eternal it means, negatively, out of time relations altogether; positively, the spiritual world. That is, that the laws of the moral life hold true in the unseen world as they do here. Does sin persist in the unseen world? Manifestly, since there is no magic in death to make a soul pure, nor any finality, so far as we can think, to check its growth or decay. In this sense hell is eternal, for sin is hell. But that it is eternal in the sense that it is to endure forever, some of us cannot admit — for that would mean ultimate Divine defeat.

And the third error, logically deduced from the other two, was the idea that the chief concern of religion is to help us escape from hell. Try to think of what that means. Could the life of faith

and prayer, of vision and service, suffer a perversion more sad? No wonder Santa Teresa prayed for a cup of water in one hand and a torch in the other, that with the one she might quench the fires of hell and with the other burn up the glories of heaven — so that men might learn to love God for His loveliness, and to do right for the sake of right. Carlyle said that the men of his day seemed moved by the selfish, sordid desire to save their own tiny little souls, and nothing else. Think of reducing religion to such a scramble for safety! Was it for this that the saints lived their heroic and dedicated lives?

Against such errors, so sadly degrading, some of us will never cease to protest. Rather do we take company with the prophets of the Larger Hope, with men like Origen, Bengel, Butler, Law, Rothe, Neander, Tholuck, Maurice, Kingsley, Erskine, and Farrar, to name but a few — teachers of the Hope in which Wesley died, and which Lord Tennyson set to music. They were men of noble character, of deep learning, of blameless loyalty to the Bible. They did not think lightly of sin or its results. They set no dates. But they did hold to the law of retribution as a law of love, intended to redeem. They did hold that God is greater than man, and that His love hath in it the secret of unknown redemptions. They dared to trust that Love can never lose its own, that

"Nothing walks with aimless feet,
And not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish in the void,
When God hath made the pile complete."

Is there any sense in which hell is eternal? Yes. Sin means loss, eternal loss. There is no making up the arrears of duty. That opportunity we missed has gone forever, and with it the enrichment which it might have brought. The Greek poet was right when he said "the one thing which the gods cannot do is to make what has been done not have been done." To all eternity we shall be poorer for the wrong we have done, and the good we have failed to do. That is what George Macdonald meant when he asked: "Will not heaven be an eternal repentance?" Jesus has bidden us to be laying up treasures in heaven; by which He meant that every man will start on the other side with the moral capital which he is now earning. The best men will have less than they might have had; and some of us — perhaps those who least think it — will find ourselves bankrupt. This is hell — a squandered heart, an unspiritual mind, a poisoned memory, an impotent will!

There is one aspect of this matter from which one can hardly bear to lift the veil. It is so horrible. It is what Shakespeare described as "captive Good attending captain Ill,"— the reactionary influence of a cherished sin upon the memory of the good we have done. Only to think that our

fairest deeds may come to be remembered as something which, if we could, we would blot out! Thank God there are those fallen low who can still say: "My good was good. No man, nor God, shall rob me of this confidence." But for many hell has no keener pang than the blasted recollection of good deeds done. What is the sorriest thing that enters hell? asks Rossetti, and answers his own question:

> "None of the sins, but this and that fair deed,
> Which a soul's sin at length can supersede."

If only youth would think, and not play with fire! Here is a Buddhist parable to the point: There was a man who had done evil with his body, his mind, his voice, and the guardians of hell bring him before the king of the dead, who questions him as follows:

"O man, did you not see the first messenger of warning appear visibly among men? Did you not see an old man, decrepit, bowed, white of hair, trembling, tottering?"

"Lord, I did; but I did not think," replied the man.

"O man, did you not see the second messenger of warning? Did you not see a man diseased, suffering, grievously sick, rolling in his pain, who, when lying down, had to be lifted by others?"

"Lord, I did, but I did not think," replied the man.

"O man, did you not see the third messenger of warning? Did you not see a man that had been three days dead, and had become swollen and black?"

"Lord, I did, but I did not think," replied the man.

"O man, did it not occur to you, being a person of mature mind and years: 'I also am subject to age, sickness, and death, and am in no way exempt. Come now! I will act nobly with body, mind, and voice'?"

"Lord, I did not think," the man replied.

"O man, through thoughtlessness you have failed to act nobly. Verily, O man, it shall be done unto you according to your thoughtlessness. It was not your mother who did this wickedness, nor your father, nor your relative, nor the deities; it was you yourself. Thou shalt have time to think in hell."

The mercy of hell! Surely Dante had a far-off glimpse of it when he saw these words written over the gate of the Inferno: "Justice moved my great Creator; divine omnipotence, highest wisdom and primal love made me." Some such hell is not only merciful, but the final hope of man. Were it otherwise, were we permitted to go on in sin unrestrained, unrebuked, untortured, there would be no hope at all. That would be a Divine indifference most to be feared, if we had care enough to fear. No, God in His great love has

not left us to ourselves, else we had wandered far. He has made the way to ruin rough, and rougher still the further we go, until we can go no further. 'Tis a mercy that it is so.

The mercy of hell! Instead of being heartless and hopeless, hell is a part of the way to salvation. So much is this true that it may almost be said that no one attains to saintliness who does not go through hell to win it. Not Dante himself ever wrote pages more vivid than those of the saints describing the path of pain they walked to the mount of vision. And surely no soul in the depths of hell ever felt keener woe than did that lone Sufferer on the Cross. Of a truth "He descended into hell," leading captivity captive and giving hope to men. He who is at once a consuming fire and the love that passeth knowledge, will never let us go. Love never faileth — for God is love.

The mercy of hell! Here is the vengeance of God — that He will never leave us to ourselves. What makes our hell is that we are trying to escape from that pressing hand, that following presence. Faith can find no perfect rest save in an inescapable, inexorable Love whose purpose nothing can turn aside. Only on a Love which will not fail of its end for any trouble to itself or for any suffering to us, can we rely. Higher than heaven is the power of God, deeper than hell is His Love!

II

THE ETERNAL RELIGION

"What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" —*Micah* 6:8.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."—*James* 1:27.

THERE is much mystery, not to say mystification, about religion, but there is not much mystery in religion — save the mystery of all the great and simple things that make it worth our time to live. Religion, when we get to the essence of it, is very simple — how simple, some of us have never dreamed. There is a philosophy of religion, at times more voluminous than luminous, and it is valuable; but it is not indispensable. We do not have to know the chemistry of cooking to enjoy a good meal, or to endure a poor one. No more do we have to fathom the intricacies of theology in order to be religious in heart and life.

These two texts, familiar but forever memorable, tell us what religion is in its simplest motive

and manifestation. It is not this dogma or that rite, but justice, mercy, humility, and fellowship with God whose Presence inspires and hallows our mortal life. It is benevolence and purity in the sight of God — visiting those in need and keeping ourselves pure in the light of Eternity. Philanthropy, without faith, is feverish and fragile. Fraternity quickly evaporates unless it has the inspiration and consecration of the Unseen. Acts must have motives. Results require causes. We cannot produce a poem by an explosion in a type foundry. Nor can we have an abiding fraternity among men, much less a noble and fruitful social order, without a subduing and exalting sense of a Divine Presence — a vast and benign background to life whence our motives and acts derive their dignity, meaning, and worth.

There is one religion in the world, and one only; one faith and only one. Religions are many, sometimes sublime, sometimes grotesque, sometimes even terrible. But Religion is one — perhaps we may say one thing, but that One Thing includes everything — the life of God in the soul of man which finds expression in all the shapes which life and love and duty take. Its forms may be myriad, but the spirit that informs all of them is the same. The church has no monopoly of religion, nor did the Bible create it. Instead, it was religion — the natural and simple trust of the soul in a Power above it and within it, and the

quest of a right relation to that Power — that created the Bible and the church. The soul of man is greater than all books, deeper than all dogmas, and older than all institutions. Religion is universal, and is as natural to man as song to a bird or color to a flower.

Human life rests upon one mighty faith — the goodness of God, call Him what you will, and the confidence that man may place in Him for life and for death. Theologies are the reasonings, theories, conjectures, systems, and traditions that have gathered about this confidence, often making it clear, sometimes making it obscure. There is no such thing as an atheist in the absolute sense. What we call atheism is seldom more than a revulsion from an unworthy notion of God; often it is the dark side of a loftier faith. He who has a higher conception of God than those about him, and who denies that their conception *is* God, is nearly always called an atheist by men who are far less believers in God than he. Socrates was accounted an atheist and accordingly put to death. The early Christians, who said the pagan idols were not Gods, were called atheists and suffered a like fate. Not all those who wear the name atheist have a nobler vision of God, but even in the wildest revolt,

> "Day by day, unconsciously,
> Men live by a faith the lips deny,
> God knoweth why."

By the same token, not every man who says Lord, Lord! is godlike in his mind and spirit. One may believe all the creeds of all the sects and yet be hard of heart and vile of life. One may deny every dogma of every sect and yet do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. Nor is religion certain things to be done. No, it is a spirit in which we are to do everything, even the giving of a cup of cold water.

> "He who sweeps a room as for Thy will,
> Makes that and the action fine,"

and his humble labor has the sanctity of a sacrament. One may preach a sermon in an irreligious spirit, and another may plow a field in a mood akin to prayer. Many kinds of life must be lived, and no one kind has a right to arrogate to itself the name religious. Religion and life are one, or neither is anything of worth.

That is to say, religion is another name for mysticism, and every man is at heart a mystic. The difference between any one of us and Francis of Assisi is only a difference of genius and spiritual culture — the difference between a boy whistling a tune and Beethoven writing a sonata. Both are musicians, one a master, the other an amateur. Nevertheless, we love St. Francis because we have within us, potentially at least, the possibility of vision and of victory revealed in him. What was the faith of St. Francis and the secret of his power

and joy? Like every great mystic he was led by one vision, made one passionate affirmation — that unity underlies all diversity. This was the basis and goal of his life, a sense of oneness, of the kinship of things, never better stated than by Krishna in the Hindu poem:

> "There is true knowledge. It is this:
> To see one changeless life in all,
> In the separate, One Inseparable."

Naturally this belief in the unity of things leads to the further faith that while forms are fleeting, the spirit endures; that the ideal is the ultimate real. Also, if this is a universe, if unity lies at the root of things, then man must have some share of the nature of God. Upon this fact of the kinship of man with God all our thinking, whether in science, philosophy, or religion, rests for its validity. Here is the fact which underlies every form of religion, and is the basis of each. If it be false or unstable, not only religion, but all human thought, is a fiction and we know not anything — nor can we ever learn. Since man is akin to God, he is capable of knowing God through what is godlike in his nature, that is, through his soul. Such is the unshakable reality upon which the great thinkers have built from Plato to Emerson, and it can never be moved.

Howbeit, we must know that spiritual knowledge is different from mere intellectual informa-

tion, not only different, but deeper. We know a thing mentally by looking at it from the outside, by comparing it with other things, by analyzing and defining it. Whereas, we can know a thing spiritually only by becoming like it. One may know the theory and philosophy of music, but he does not know music until his soul answers to its appeal of melody. One must love in order to know love, as it is written, " He who loveth is born of God *and knoweth God, for God is love.*" Like is known only to like, and the one condition of the highest knowledge is likeness to, and union with, the object of knowledge. Therefore the ceaseless aspiration of the mystic is to be godlike, that he may know God. As Eckhart said, God and the soul are one in the act of knowing Him.

Why do we love music? What is the secret of that strange, sweet enchantment which music casts over us, lifting us for a brief time out of the fret and jar of life into a free and happy air? Music is unity, harmony, an echo of that infinite harmony we call God — a prophecy of the truth that all discords to one concord lead. That is to say, music is mystical, like love, like beauty, like prayer, like all else that makes our life luminous and free; and mysticism is religion. Everything that brings us into harmony with ourselves, with the true, the beautiful, and the good, is religion. That is why the religious aspiration is the inspiration of all scientific search, which is a search for

harmony, all striving for liberty, all virtue and charity — the spirit of all high thought, the motif of all great music, the soul of all great literature. Such a conception of religion shakes the poison out of all our wild flowers, and shows us that in all high endeavor we are seeking union with God:

"For not alone in starry skies
In vastness all abroad,
But everywhere in every place
Abides the whole of God.
For God is never so far off
As even to be near.
He is within, our spirit is
What He holds most dear."

Love of God and love of man — that is the one eternal religion in which all men agree. What is the relation of Christianity to this eternal religion? Most of us were brought up to think that Christianity is the one true religion, and that all others are false. How does it look now? Is it Christian to think that those vast populations, following each other through millenniums, all of them eager, as we are, to know the truth, sinning and suffering like ourselves, and like ourselves boundlessly aspiring, were left without God and without hope? Wider knowledge of our race, together with the irresistible maturing of the human mind, have made such a notion intolerable alike to heart and mind. Nor are we the first to ask such a question. Chrysostom tells us that the men of his

church asked why Christ did not come sooner, and what about the dealing of God with those who lived before He came?

For many it will be surprising to know that the early Christian thinkers held no such narrow notions as we have been taught to hold. Far from it. Justin Martyr held that Socrates was inspired by the "eternal Word" made flesh in Christ, and with this Origen agreed. Augustine said that the Christian faith is that which has been in the world from the beginning, and has not been absent from any age. Erasmus actually came forward with a plea to canonize Socrates and Vergil as saints of the most high God. Such has been the faith and feeling of all the great catholic souls, as witness the words of William Law, which Wesley made his own:

"Perhaps what the best heathens called Reason, and Solomon Wisdom, St. Paul Grace in general, St. John Righteousness or Love, Luther Faith, Fénelon Virtue, may be only different expressions for one and the same blessing, the light of Christ shining in different degrees under different dispensations. Why then so many words, and so little charity exercised among Christians, about the particular term of a blessing experienced more or less by all righteous men!"

Here are great and true words, worthy to be writ in letters of light, and they rebuke our petty bigotries with their simple insight and the dignity

of their golden voice. No; Christianity is not to be set over against other forms of faith as something inserted into human history, but as something growing up out of the universal religion of humanity — the loveliest flower in the garden of God. Christ did not come to destroy, but to fulfil — the desire of all nations, the great Musician who gathered up into His sweet voice every wandering human tone, weaving them into one sovereign harmony. And this, so far from being a compromise of our faith, is a vast reinforcement and confirmation of it. Its position becomes more secure in a new way, by the discovery that it is a fulfilment of age-long prophecy — the eternal religion, the crown of all, because the flower and fruit of all.

How unforgetable are the words of William Penn, when he said that all merciful, humble, just, and devout souls are everywhere of one religion, and when death hath taken off the mask, they will know and love each other. Happily we no longer have to wait for death to remove the mask that hides man from his fellow soul! Our age has many faults, but it is great in its sense of the unity of mankind, in its vision of the solidarity of faith and hope. As Mark Rutherford said, we are coming to see that "we are one in the human, the immense orthodoxy which lies beneath our differences," and this makes for a friendship of faiths. The human fellowship with the Eternal, under

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whatever name, may well hush all words, still more hush debate. If its unity is not recognized, the fault must be, in large part, our own. But given the one great experience, and at last, despite all variations of insight and emphasis, kindred souls will join in the one eternal religion — knowing that, even when they use different phrases, all are trying to tell, each in his own tongue, the truth that is the treasure of all.

Since this is so, since we are partakers of a like precious faith and hope and vision, it ought to be easy for us to love all our fellow-workers in the cause of moral culture and spiritual life. Just because religion is life, it takes many forms in infinite variety, and its myriad colors bespeak its vitality and beauty. Had Confucius, Buddha, Plato, Socrates, Plutarch sat on the grass and listened to the Sermon on the Mount, all would have said Amen. In like spirit let us seek to know, to understand, and to love our fellow seekers and finders of the God who is the Father of all, and the Savior of each. Evermore it is the truth that makes us free, and the more truth we know the freer we shall be, building more stately mansions for the soul till at length we are free indeed. What Longfellow said of Channing may well be the life and labor of every man who loves God and his fellows:

> "With reverent feet the earth he trod,
> Nor banished nature from his plan;

But studied still with deep research
To build a universal Church,
Lofty as the love of God,
And ample as the wants of man."

III

THE FIRST TRUTH

"In the beginning God."—*Gen.* 1 : 1.

HERE is the first truth and the last, the greatest thought in the world, the most profound, the most revealing, the most satisfying. History tells us What has happened, science seeks to know How it happened, philosophy tries to tell us Why it happened; but they leave us with one question still in our hearts. What we most want to know is, Who made it happen, Who spread out this far-shining city of the universe and gave us a home and a duty in it? That is why, after man has studied the earth and the sky, and reviews what he has learned, he finds his heart unsatisfied, and even restless, until one other question is somehow answered. So it has been from the beginning, and so it will be until the end, while human nature is the same.

Therefore it is that the Bible, the wisest and deepest book that broods over the mystery of life, begins its great story at the beginning, and answers the last question first. Nor has all the wit and wisdom of the ages been able to give a better answer. With an insight clear as light the old

book goes straight to the heart of the mystery, and time has shown that its answer is in accord with right reason, the verdict of moral sanity, and the testimony of facts when rightly read. The Bible does not argue; it affirms. Its truth is the fruit of religious experience, and its vision of the unity, spirituality and righteousness of God, who is the beginning and the end of all things, is the greatest gift that ever came to the world from any source.

Admit that this truth dawned slowly and dimly upon the human mind, amidst narrow notions, limited and passionate like the people who saw it, the following of that vision becomes the more pathetic and heroic. No matter; it grew as the mind of man was able to grasp it, and the heart was pure enough to hold it. From time to time a radiant man was born who added something of power and dignity to that which his race revealed, making the truth clearer. Other races, such as Egypt and India, outtopped the Hebrews in intellectual and artistic power, but in the depth and sanity of their religious insight the mighty seers who wrote the Bible have never been equaled. Even to-day we are only beginning to spell out the meaning of the unity of the universe, which they beheld ages ago. Let us never forget that long before science learned to talk about the physical unity of the world, those hoary prophets saw its moral and spiritual unity in God. For them, He

who was God from everlasting, before ever the earth was formed, was the sufficient ground for every possible unity of science and philosophy — so far and so fast did their spiritual insight outrun the intellect of the race.

No one ought ever again to take this text and forget the lines of Alfred Noyes in exposition of it. Some of us heard him read these lines when he was here as our guest, his face aglow with the faith of which he sang, his body swayed by the music of his words. Written at a time when men fancied that they had found the Origin of Life this side of God, the poem takes us back behind the centuries, back of the mire and slime of evolution, back into the darkness before the dawn of creative time, and demands, as a challenge alike to reason and reverence, that men kneel where once they dared to doubt. Hear now an authentic strain of the ancient faith of humanity:

"'In the beginning?'— Slowly grope we back
Along the narrowing track,
Back to the deserts of the world's pale prime,
The mire, the clay, the slime;
And then, what then? Surely something less;
Back, back to Nothingness!
You dare not halt upon that dwindling way!
There is no gulf to stay
Your footsteps to the last. Go back you must!
Far, far below the dust,
Descend, descend! Grade by dissolving grade,
We follow, unafraid!
Dissolve, dissolve this moving world of men
Into thin air — and then?

"O pioneers, O warriors of the Light,
In that abysmal night,
Will you have courage, then, to rise and tell
Earth of this miracle?
Will you have courage, then, to bow the head,
And say, when all is said—
'Out of this Nothingness arose our thought!
This blank abysmal nought
Woke, and brought forth that lighted city street,
Those towers, that armored fleet'?

"When you have seen those vacant primal skies
Beyond the centuries.
Watched the pale mists across their darkened flow,
As in a lantern-show,
Weaving, by merest 'chance,' out of thin air,
Pageants of praise and prayer;
Watched the great hills like clouds arise and set,
And one—named Olivet;
When you have seen, as a shadow passing away,
One child clasp hands and pray;
When you have seen emerge from that dark mire
One martyr, ringed with fire;
Or, from that Nothingness, by special grace,
One woman's love-lit face,

"Will you have courage, then, to front that law
(From which your sophists draw
Their only right to flout our human creed)
That nothing can proceed—
Not even thought, not even love—from less
Than its own nothingness?
The law is yours! But dare you waive your pride,
And kneel where you denied?
The law is yours! Dare you re-kindle, then,
One faith for faithless men,
And say you found, on that dark road you trod,
'In the beginning—God'?"

An atheist, if he be honest, is worthy of respect, but he ought to be brave enough to follow his logic to its ultimate limit. Few, however, have

ever dared to do it. Romanes confessed, when he had lost faith in God, that he was strangely lonely, and that life had lost its soul of loveliness. Dostoevsky, driven by doubt into dark despair, felt that God pursued him even into the shadows and would not let him alone. Of men of refined and sensitive nature, only Nietzsche was heroic enough to face the raw horror at the end of his logic of denial, and the result was obfuscation of intellect and final insanity. How pathetic are his words lamenting his loss of the right to pray! They move like a dirge, with the solemn step of the funeral chant in the music of Chopin, and they tell, as perhaps no other words have told, what atheism means to a heart that feels:

"Never more wilt thou pray, never more worship, never more repose in boundless trust — thou renouncest the privilege of standing before an ultimate wisdom, an ultimate mercy, an ultimate power, and unharnessing thy thoughts — thou hast no constant watcher and friend for thy seven solitudes — thou livest without gazing upon a mountain that hath snow on its head and fire at its heart — there is now no redeemer for thee, no one to promise a better life — there is no more reason in that which happens, no love in that which shall happen to thee — thy heart hath now no resting-place, where it needeth only to find, not to seek; thou refusest any ultimate peace, thou desirest the eternal recurrence of war and peace —

man of thy self-denial, wilt thou deny thyself all this? Whence will thou gain the strength?"

Now, remember; my talk to-day is no effort to prove that God is, which would be too much like arguing about the air we breathe, or the light by which we see. Fact is, if there were no God no one would think about Him at all, no one would believe in Him, much less deny Him. Our very doubts bear witness to His reality. If one so far forgets the ancient sanities and sanctities of his race as to argue about God, he must have a care how he does it. In order to argue a man must assume that he has a mind, and if there be no eternal Mind that is a violent assumption. One might perhaps prove, by logic, that there ought to be a God, but he cannot prove God by logic, since logic itself must first be proved valid. No, my thesis is that unless we find God at the beginning of our thought, we cannot hope to find Him at the end, or, indeed, anywhere. Whoso ascends from a godless world will reach only a godless heaven, and will come down empty-hearted.

Nevertheless, let us climb one of the many ladders of logic and see what we shall see. For example, let us say, In the beginning Law. One of the very first lessons of science is that the universe is ruled by law. Atoms and masses, ponderables and imponderables, dew-drops and stars — all are evidently under the reign of law. Not a seed grows, not a leaf opens, not a bud bursts, not a

snowflake falls, not a cloud gathers, not a wind blows, not a tide flows, but according to law. These laws are universal, as active in the instant present as in the ancient past. They will be active in the distant future. They rule the far-off orbs, even as they sway our earth in its orbit, securing order everywhere. It is as true there, as here, that light travels in a straight line, that heavenly bodies move in ellipses, that like produces like, and that two bodies attract each other with a force that varies according to the inverse of the square of their separating distance. Everywhere law waves its scepter. Other planets have died. Ours may. In 1866 a star flared up out of the edge of the sky with a brilliancy equaling Sirius or Vega. Soon it began to fade. The spectroscope revealed the red, green and violet lines of hydrogen fires. It was burned to a cinder. If our sun should blaze out like that the earth and all its planets would be converted into gases as quickly as a drop of water turns to vapor in the furnace. Yet still would law prevail, as it prevailed before the earth was born.

Now reason commands us to believe that Law presupposes Design, else it were not law, but chaos. Design is the logical, if not intuitional, inference from the fact of law. We are forced to think so. Socrates used a statue as an illustration, Paley a watch, Fiske a flower. No matter, the result is the same. So the proposition stands: in the be-

ginning Law; in the law, Design. But design presupposes intelligence. The various and intricate designs of natural law are evidence of an intelligence so complex, so beyond the power of man to comprehend, that deist, theist and atheist alike unite to call it Infinite. To be sure, we have not read much in the Book of Nature, only here a word and there a line, and many pages are still dark. But, so far as we can read, its lawful order points to an infinite intelligence. Also, new pages are daily being added to it. Now where are we? In the beginning Law; in law Design; in design Intelligence — in infinite design, Infinite Intelligence. Inevitably, to this result runs the logic of the ages.

Some of us have walked dim paths in days agone, under gray skies, but we never fell into the profound unreason of thinking that man alone has mind. Yet just as certainly is it true that a God who is found at the top of a logical ladder will never satisfy the human mind, much less win the love of the human heart. What we want is not the conclusion of an argument, not a proposition of logic, but the living God in whom we live and by whose grace we may live godlike lives. This too is certain: until we find the Living God — who is not far from any one of us, but with us always, even in our hearts — life is a restless fever, a dull indifference, or a dumb despair.

Therefore, he is wisest who seeks the first truth first, who finds the living God in the morning of life, in the laws of reason, in the prophecies of love, in the promptings of conscience — for no imaginable dance of atoms could have evoked the moral sense in man — for he who finds God early will find Him late, and at eventide there will be light all round the sky. By the same token, he it is who finds God along the way, and, walking humbly before Him, is the better able to do justly, to love mercy, and to serve his fellow souls.

In the beginning God — here is the truth that lets light through the long, dark, tragic story of Evolution, and its slow ascending effort. St. Paul saw this gleam centuries ago, in his vision of the birth travail of the universe, the key and prophetic consummation of which he found in Christ; and his insight was as profound as it was true. For him, a universe that could produce Christ became a thing of splendor, despite its tragedy and woe. For him, the fact of Christ became, and rightly so, the foundation of any philosophy of nature, the clue to any explanation of life, and the hope of the victory of righteousness, His spirit a revelation of the purpose of the world and a prophecy of its end. Aye, what a light is here, shining far back down the unreckonable ages, transfiguring even the mud and slime of primeval time; and in its glow the darkness fades away:

"A fire-mist and a planet,
A crystal and a cell,
A jelly-fish and a saurian,
And caves where the cave-men dwell;
Then a sense of law and beauty,
And a face turned from the clod —
Some call it Evolution,
And others call it God."

In the beginning, God — so and only so can we read the mystery of our own hearts, with their strange longings, their aspirations heaven-high, their sorrows fathoms deep, and their thoughts that wander through eternity. Otherwise our minds are like Whitman's Noiseless and Patient Spider, forever spinning threads of thought and throwing them out into the void, and forever hoping that they will catch somewhere. But once we know that at the beginning, at the end, over all, through all, there is a mighty and loving Thinker, whose thoughts evoke our thoughts, whose beauty woos us with its loveliness, whose love begets within us a love that defies death, then our life has dignity and meaning, and religious experience, equally with artistic creation and scientific quest, finds explanation and inspiration. Then, too, we know why there come moments when earth seems too tiny for the thoughts that well up within us, and our fleeting life too frail and brief to achieve the things we dare to dream; those moments of revelation, when

"Like tides on a crescent sea-beach,
When the moon is new and thin,

Into our hearts high yearnings
Come swelling and surging in:
Come from that mystic ocean
Whose rim no foot has trod —
Some of us call it Longing,
And others call it God."

In the beginning, God — not otherwise can we justify the idealisms, the altruisms, and the heroisms of our poor humanity. At times one is tempted to agree with Machiavelli that men are a measly lot, selfish, petty, incredibly mean, absurdly vain, unspeakably vile. Human nature can sink so low that it must make the animals ashamed. There are eras when the whole world seems rotten, when love is lust and gold is god, and every kind of slimy thing runs riot. Our own day, with its wild hell of universal war and slaughter, is a time to try the souls of men, and one often feels like Elijah under the juniper tree making request to die. Yet he forgot, what we forget, that even in an age as foul as a pig sty there were thousands who had not bowed the knee to Baal. In every age there are those to whom the Ideal is the shadow of God in the mind of man — souls that remain true though lewdness woo them in the shape of heaven; men who will die for the right and count it an honor; soldiers of God who never surrender and never fear:

"A picket frozen on duty,
A mother starved for her brood,
Socrates drinking the hemlock,
And Jesus on the rood;

And millions who, humble and nameless,
The straight, hard pathway plod —
Some call it Consecration,
And others call it God."

In the beginning, God — even He whose love hath made us, and endowed us with faculties almost divine; who has made a world for our home, who spreads our table and renews our youth; He whose love suffers long and still is kind. Here is the truth about this our mortal life, and its explanation. It broadens our horizon, so that life means more than "a blunder or a sorry jest," something more than the "stuff that dreams are made of," something more than a few fleeting years between a birth and a burial.

"This is the glory — that in all conceived,
Or felt, or known, I recognize a mind
Not mine, but like mine — for the double joy —
Making all things for me and me for Him."

IV

THE HIDDEN GOD

"Oh that I knew where I might find him!"—*Job* 23:3.

"Though he be not far from every one of us."—*Acts* 17:27.

"Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself."—*Isa.* 45:15.

OF old Job uttered his cry for God in the desert, and it has found echo in every age and every land. Even in the grey dawn of time we see human hands stretched out to heaven in quest of God; and all along the dark and tangled path of history, in

> "The night-time when nations wander
> From Eden past to Paradise to be,"

the search goes on. To-day, at noontide, not less than in the twilight of the world, on the peaks of thought, in the shadowy labyrinths of metaphysics, in the temple and in the field, in the library and laboratory, at the end of the long marches of the intellect, in the valley of sorrow, and at the gates of the grave — evermore the same cry is heard.

Unconscious oft, unsatisfied ever, we are all en-

gaged in this one great quest. Though he may not know it, and would perhaps demur, the man of science, not less than the saint, each in his own way is trying to find God in His works; and the physician equally with the farmer. Not all men are conscious of the nature of the unrest which makes them seekers and pilgrims, but when they become aware of the path which leads thither where they want to go, they know that the goal is God. This is the one great human adventure. Taking nothing with us which does not belong to us, leaving behind nothing that is of our true selves, we shall find in the great attainment that all our fellow mortals have been our comrades. Ever the quest goes on, and ever shall the study of the ways which have been followed by those who have passed in front of us be a help on our own path.

Worse than idle is the effort of the skeptic to stop this quest by saying that it is a useless one. It is not useless, as a glance back over the way our race has journeyed will show. The first word for God meant, literally, the dreadful One. Later men thought of Him as a white-haired patriarch dwelling in a sky-tent, leading a flock of stars; then as a monarch sitting on a dazzling throne. Still later they saw a big Man who made the world, set it going, and left it to run, manifesting Himself in occasional miracles. In our age we think of God as the all-pervading, sustaining, in-

dwelling Spirit, greater, wiser and better than we know how to think, and therefore worthy of worship. But it was only by untiring search, by rising on stepping stones of old dead faiths, that we attained to this larger, nobler faith. Those who seek find, not because God is far off, but because the discipline of the quest makes us worthy of a more revealing vision.

Underlying this perpetual quest is the feeling, the faith, that God is the beginning, the inspiration, and the end of human life; and that intuition is true. The great thinker was right when he refused to believe in the reality of anything until he had satisfied himself of the reality of God. He saw that without God all is dream and shadow here below, as futile as fleeting. Still, such is the elusiveness of God, that we search in the far-away sky, and in the dark tower of speculation, for One who is nearer than hands and feet. All men, except the most dim-souled, feel at times an awful yet gracious Presence haunting the world, giving to nature a strange and solemn beauty. It is the self-concealing, invisible God, at once inescapable and uncapturable. Listen reverently, and He whispers to us; invade His silence, and He vanishes. Nothing is more impressive, more alluring, than this hiding of God, whereby He leads us after Him in endless quest and "draws out the lines of life from living knowledge hid."

Not far from every one of us — but man al-

ways fails to see what is nearest to him. Great truths peep out at us from nearby facts, but we do not see them. Apples had been falling since the days of Adam, but it was ages before man saw in the fall of an apple the law that holds all things to the earth. It seems that we must actually trip and fall over a truth before we find it. The prophet is the man who sees the obvious truths which we overlook, and that is why we get angry at him and call him a mystic. It was the great and simple word of Jesus that God is found not in the sky above, nor in the wandering stars, but in the soul of man. He is ever telling us that the pure in heart see God, that the kingdom of heaven is within, and that the highest reality is hidden from the learned and wise and revealed to the simple and child-like of soul. Of a truth, God hides Himself, but only because we are slow of heart and have not eyes to see.

He is hidden in Nature, and it is the perfection of His work conceals Him. Often nature is almost transparent and we seem to be in the very presence of the Eternal, with but a filmy veil to obscure. There are scenes so ineffably lovely that they turn our hearts into homes of silent prayer; but if we drink of her tenderness we must also taste of her terror. Between man and Nature there is a gigantic struggle, and often she seems heartless and cruel. What then? If God is in such hours of wild storm, He is hidden by a thick

and heavy drapery. At best, even when Nature displays her beauty and sweetness in all their fullness, she is only the fringe of His garment, and we must go further to find Him. Yet how wonderful is that garment of God, how exquisitely woven, half-concealing and half-revealing Him who wears it!

If you ever saw the *Autobiography* of Houdin, the famous French conjuror, you know the story of the wonderful automaton figure of a man which he made. Wishing to imitate Nature, he set great store on the fact that the clock-work was noiseless, but he wrought too well. People said: "Very ingenious, but probably simple, since often a slight change will effect great results." Then he actually made it less perfect, so that a whizzing sound was heard within, and the worthy public exclaimed: "Wonderful! What talent, what ingenuity!" Happily he repented having injured his machine to please the public, and restored it to its first perfection. But God does not mar His work to win the applause of those who judge things by the noise they make. He is calm, and His vast plan moves on its way in silence, even if we fail to see its wonder and its mystery.

Think of the good ship Earth on which we ride spinning through space at such rapid speed, and how quietly. Thistledown does not float more softly on the breeze, nor a moth in the sunbeam more lightly, than this vast orb sweeps its orbit.

Even when the wind dies and no single leaf stirs, we hear no slightest sound made by this mighty Ship of the Skies, no ripple dashing on her prow, no murmur in her wake. If the seasons were made by some gigantic lever hoisting the earth up or down with start and jolt, men would find God in the noise. If the world were turned on its axis by a stupendous crank that hurt our ears with its jar, how men would stand aghast at the power of God. As it is, poised in free space it sweeps its mighty round in silence, and some there are who, hearing no noise and seeing no lever, doubt whether or not there is a God at all.

God conceals Himself in the life of man, hiding in so many forms of beauty, joy and sorrow that we often fail to find Him. What a testimony to His ever-present goodness is the playfulness of young animals in the spring sunshine, and their sheer glee at being alive! Lay your ear to the heart of a child and you will hear the same note of joy, of sweet and rippling gladness. Ever in unbroken silence the eternal Bounty pours out its treasures. Happy the child who, when the soul awakes, as it did in Samuel, has a teacher wise enough to show him who it is that stirs within, and how to say: "Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth." Aye, and happy is such a teacher; for through him the Spirit of the hidden God passes, as melody through a harp, into the soul of a child. Even so the Divine life passes from heart to heart,

from age to age, in the true apostolic succession, as the breeze, blowing over a field of grain, bows each head at its touch.

What man can look into his heart and trace the genealogy of those mystic moods that come over us betimes and melt our minds to prayer and praise? One moment life seems as bare as a winter wood, and the next it is bathed in a beauty not of earth, as if a window of heaven had been opened and we heard the great song of triumph! When temptation strives within, tugging at our senses, who is it pulls the other way, seeking to hold us back from evil? Even in the most careless soul there is some bit of earnestness, and the harlot has a fleeting memory of a day when life was stainless. Whence our glimpse of the Ideal, our sense of the Infinite which will not let us rest, and shames our performance in the presence of our promise? Wherefore a slowly increasing insight, a gradually developing character, and a longing for intellectual and spiritual growth? George Eliot has a noble page in "Adam Bede" on which she sees the spirit of God moving in the mind of the inventor, and the lonely vigil of the thinker. Truly "God comes to us without a bell," and so mingles with our lives that we hardly know He is near:

> "Draw, if thou canst, the mystic line
> Severing rightly His from thine,
> Which is human, which Divine!"

There are souls so great and pure and noble that in them the hidden God seems to take human form and walk beside us, hallowing all our way. One such spirit can sweeten the air of a whole age, as St. Francis did in his day, and to know them is a kind of religion. Also, in obscure, unexpected lives we meet this same wonder. Heine, the German poet, confessed surprise that, "after dancing nearly half a lifetime over the waxen floors of philosophy," he had to come at last and sit at the feet of Uncle Tom in his cabin to learn the meaning of the word God. Heine knew logic; he knew philosophy; he was a poet and a wit; but no one ever found God by climbing the bright stairway of the intellect. He who ascends from a Godless earth will find himself in a Godless heaven. Verily the old slave was wiser than the famous wit, having learned in sorrow and stripes, in poverty and bruisings of spirit, the secret which makes it worth while to live, and which lends lustre to the hardest, dingiest human lot. The spot where God is nearest to us is a human soul animated and aglow with His spirit.

God is hidden in history, in its epochs of advance, its awful eras of decay, and even in its frightful scenes that make the heart of man stand still. As Froude said, history is a voice that thunders through the ages the laws of right and wrong. Slowly the dawn gains upon the dark, from seeming evil good emerges, and the mighty will of God

is done. Carlyle, in an hour of anguish, exclaimed, "If God would only speak again!" echoing the old cry of Job. It was a cry for light, for assurance that the things believed in are true, for certainty amidst the mutations of time. Apparently he found it easy to think that God spoke to men in days of old, but that was an illusion, in so far as it implied that He does not speak to men to-day. If God has ever spoken to humanity, He speaks to it in this age. It is incredible that, in the distant past, the soul of man was nearer God than it is now.

Carlyle himself, despite his limits of insight and sympathy, was a prophet of the Most High. His passion for righteousness, his protest against the authority of mere numbers or mere wealth, his appeal for justice and mercy for the poor, his affirmation of the supremacy of duty and the dignity of the soul, betrayed his seer-like genius. Other voices, more melting than his, spoke for God in that troublous time of transition. Every age has its witnesses of the God who, as Jesus said, is not the God of the dead but of the living. Those who speak of God as though His name were *I Was,* instead of the great *I Am,* are the victims of that illusion of distance whereby the past seems beautiful because its ugly features are erased. Yet even this illusion may have its ministry, in that it forces us to seek in the present for Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

Why does God hide Himself in Nature, in Humanity, in History, eluding the eager quest of man? Surely the reason must be obvious in the very nature of things. The thinkers of Egypt were wise when they wrote over the temple of Isis the words of warning, "I am what was, is, and is to be, and my veil no man may lift and live." Merciful is the obscurity which hides the Eternal from us, lest we be like the artist in the legend who, longing for beauty, prayed to see the ultimate Beauty. For a moment the veil was parted, and it broke his heart. Thereafter, even his noblest work seemed but a pitiful daub, and he had no will to try again. This is but a feeble illustration of what would happen if the Infinite were suddenly to unveil Himself to man. Pascal wisely said: "God wishes to render Himself recognizable to such as seek Him with their whole heart, and hidden to those who do not."

Those who cry out that the Eternal drop His veil know not what they ask. If God were to reveal Himself as a human personality reveals itself, not only by spiritual influences, but by a tangible presence, every man would be struck dumb, every will would be subjugated, freedom would vanish like a dream, and the moral life would end. The activity of the moral world, with liberty of choice, the chief function of which is to develop character, would be instantly annihilated, and men would be as puppets. Nothing in the Divine edu-

cation of man is more striking than the respect which the Infinite pays the soul of man, and that wise vagueness in which God hides, while hovering near us. By His withdrawal we are able to share His thought, not merely receive it, and such goodness as we attain is ours, not merely His. As it is, He comes to us by a thousand byways instead of standing in the highway; and heaven, so far from being forced upon us, is for our seeking.

Wisely, then, a veil is drawn between us and a Reality which would be unendurable, and never yet has it been lifted. Even in the life of Jesus, where, as all admit, the Divine Spirit wore our human form, with a voice that used our homely human speech, it was veiled in a personality, and its power was expressed, as human power is ever expressed, chiefly by nobility of teaching, by words of beauty and works of mercy which made its path through life bloom with flowers of kindness, helpfulness, and good cheer; in a spirit warm with love and radiant with sweetness and a heavenly light. Yet there were some who doubted, and others who sneered and denied. *Tell us plainly,* said His foes; *Show us the Father,* asked His friends; while at that very moment He walked beside them, sat with them at table, and uttered words that can never die.

Thus God hides Himself from us, that we may taste the joy of discovering that He is everywhere

and in everything: that "in Him we live and move and have our being." Yea, He hides within us, though few know how to find Him. The man who sacrifices his base desires and works by the will of Him who lives within, and whose law is written in his heart, attains to the truth that makes him free of soul.

"Great God and Father of us all,
Forgive our faith in cruel lies,
Forgive the blindness that denies.
Cast down our idols — overturn
Our bloody altars — make us see
Thyself in Thy Humanity."

V

WITH ALL THY HEART

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." —*Luke* 10:27.

THERE are those who say that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but that is not true. Mayhap it is true to the lexicographer, to whom the rose is only a prickly shrub bearing a flower; but to the poet the rose is all that it has become through the praise of the poets and lovers for untold ages. Saadi and Sappho, Dante and Petrarch, and many a singer in the lovely land of England, have added each his touch of glamour and interpretation, until "the rose is a symbol of the pathetic frailty and evanescence of beauty, an image of the fragrant human hopes and dreams lost upon all the winds of the world, and a reminder that the fairest things are won through toil and pain."

Just so it is, only in a profounder way, with the word God, which gathers up into its three letters the history of piety, the hauntings of the human heart in its highest aspirations, and the whole of theology. No other word has such far-reaching

echoes, such exalted accent, such fathomless suggestion, such ineffable prophecy. When we come to the end of thought, and sit down on the edge of the infinite, all we can do is to utter that one unutterable name. All religion, all philosophy, all the treasures won by man in his long pilgrimages, are in that word. Age after age, as mankind rises into the life that is life indeed, that word is fulfilled of a holier and grander meaning, until today it is itself a prayer in which love and awe, fear and hope and faith, are blended.

Yet nothing is easier, as Newman said, than "to use the word God and mean nothing by it." What do we mean by it? What is God to us? What emotion does that word evoke in our heart, what echoes? An answer to such questions tells what religion is to us, what it means, and what it is worth. Theologians talk of a science of God, but not so the saints. "Lord, Thou knowest our foolishness," is the cry of the humility that is religious. He perfectly knows God, said Rolle, who realizes that He is incomprehensible and beyond full knowledge. What does it mean to love God? How can we love Him? Can we send our love out into the infinite and lay hold of the hem of His robe? When we try to do so our very thought seems to melt like a mist into the sky, lost beyond tracing. How can we love the Infinite, the Unseen, the Incomprehensible, as we are bidden to do in the first and greatest command-

ment? If this can be made plain to us, surely the hour has not been spent in vain.

There is a lovely bit of scenery in the vale of Mickleham, between Leatherhead and Dorking, where the creeping Mole winds its way between Box Hill and the park lands of Norbury. At the point where the highway spans the stream at Burford Bridge there is an ancient and much frequented inn, where Stevenson rested for a time, and where, in an earlier day, Keats wrote a part of his "Endymion." Taking the old moon-myth of classic lore, he recast it, filling it with all the bewildering, teeming richness of his invention and insight. Two great truths, both quite simple in themselves, may be traced all through the intricacies of a poem written in the dialect of angels, in tales and golden histories. One is that the soul, seeking union with the eternal Beauty, cannot achieve its quest in solitude and selfishness, but only after being purified and set free from self. The whole third book of Endymion tells how the hero, surprised into self-forgetfulness by sympathy with the sage and sea-god under the afflictions laid upon him, is enabled to break the evil spell of Circe. For reward he is endowed by the sage with all his own dear-bought treasures of mystic knowledge and power; and, thus empowered, he finds that he can the better serve his fellows.

With this is joined the other truth that love of all the manifold beauties of things and beings upon

earth is in its nature identical with love of the eternal Beauty. Many adventures befall the hero, both in dreams and in reality, and he is all the time tormented by the fear that these lower loves are making him unfaithful to the Goddess to whom he has given his plight. At last he falls in love with an Indian maid whom he finds lost and forsaken in the forest, and vows to give up his heavenly quest for her sake. But she cannot accept such a sacrifice, and they both plan schemes of renunciation, she to be a votaress and he to live the life of a hermit. At the last moment the maid drops her disguise, and he finds that she is none other than the Goddess herself. The quest is ended, the mystery solved; and he learns that mortal love is needed to humanize the heavenly, and the heavenly to hallow the mortal — that the two, at their highest and best, are one, uniting love of God and love of man.

This truth is radiantly expounded by Rupert Brooke, whose life was lost, alas! in the great war, and who sleeps amid the wild thyme and poppies of the isle of Scyros. In his poem entitled "The Great Lover," one of the noblest of poems of recent years, he celebrates with glee his happy love of life in all its myriad shapes, regretting that these forms of beauty pass so quickly away, but prophesying that from beyond the hills of death he will still be singing "the splendor of Love's praise, the pain, the calm, and the astonishment,

desire illimitable and still content." Then with all richness of detail he tells the things he loves, like an angel taking an inventory of heaven —

"White plates and cups, clean-gleaning,
Ringed with blue lines; and feathery, faery dust;
Wet rooms, beneath the lamp-light; the strong crust
Of friendly bread; and many-tasting food;
Rainbows; and the blue bitter smoke of wood;
And radiant raindrops crouching in cool flowers;
And flowers themselves, that sway through sunny hours,
Dreaming of moths that drink them under the moon;
Then, the cool kindliness of sheets, that soon
Smooth away trouble,"—

and on and on through a long list of things great and small, with many a phrase that flashes gem-like in the sun, teaching us that love of life is love of God. Add now these lines by St. Augustine, which move with the lilt of a lyric love of God, finding parables of His presence in all the forms that life and beauty take:

"What is it that I love in loving Thee, O my God? Not corporeal beauty, not the splendor of time, nor the radiance of the light, so pleasant to the eyes, nor the sweet melodies of songs of all kinds, nor the fragrance of flowers, and ointments, and spices, not manna and honey, not limbs pleasant to the embracement of flesh. I love not these things when I love my God; and yet I love a certain kind of light, and sound, and fragrance, and food, and embracement in loving God, who is light, sound, fragrance, food and embracement to my inner man — where that light shineth unto

my soul which no place can contain, where that soundeth which time snatcheth not away, where there is fragrance which no breeze disperseth, where there is food which no eating can diminish, and where that clingeth which no satiety can sunder. That is what I love, when I love my God."

Thus saint interprets poet, and both together show us that the varied and enchanting beauty of life is but "a dome of many-colored glass which stains the bright radiance of eternity." God be thanked for seers who can bring high truth within our ken, teaching us that religion and life are one, or neither is of any worth. God is here; eternity is now. Who loves the truth loves God. Who goes in quest of beauty is seeking Him whose is the strange and solemn loveliness of the world. Who plights his vows with the Ideal, yielding obedience to its high behest, is keeping tryst with the Infinite Idealist in whom our visions find reality and fulfillment. Love of home and family, fidelity to our friends, loyalty to comrade and country, the care of a mother for her babe, the solicitude of a patriot for his land, these are so many ways of loving God, equally with the rising smoke of incense and the hushed awe of prayer. Life yields its meaning only to those who love it, discovering the love of God and loving Him in return.

How can we learn to love God? First of all,

there must be the deep wish, the profound desire for it, since it is our desires that determine what we are, what we receive, and what we achieve. The little girl in "The Servant in the House," who wished for a father, learned the truth taught by Canon Mozley in a noble sermon: that if we wish for a great spiritual gift, sooner or later that gift will be ours, provided it be the supreme wish of our hearts. Of that which a man desires in youth, said Goethe, of that he shall have in age as much as he will, because all prayers are answered in the end. Aspiration is not mocked; "blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." No high and true desire of the soul fails of attainment, if we let it have its way with us, removing the things that hinder and following its lead. Make no mistake, He who hath made us for Himself never evokes in us a desire but that sooner or later He will satisfy it.

Let us add to desire faith, even the faith that "herein is love, not that we love God, but that He loved us and gave Himself for us." Even our longing to love God is but a response to the beseeching love of God which wraps us round, in sorrow not less than in joy. There are days when we feel it to be so, days when life is an enchantment and death seems like a dream. But there come other days when life is gray with care, or overcast with sorrow, or dark with sin, and the

love of God seems like a fiction. Every mortal has his misgivings, yet we must rest upon the faith that we love God because He first loved us, even if it is like stepping off a precipice. At such times, as Coleridge urged in his "Aids to Reflection," if you would restore a truth to its first lustre it must be translated into action. Service can save our faith when faith itself is fading. Help some one else, do it because God loves you and loves them, and the sky will clear. Not by disputing, said an old mystic, but "by doing will He be known, and by loving."

Once there lived in Yorkshire a wise and holy man named Richard Rolle. Little is known of him, save that he was at Oxford in 1316, and that he left three years later, wearied or disgusted with arid disputings, to live a solitary life. He afterwards wrote a book called "Incendium Amoris," which he dedicated not to philosophers and wise men of the world, nor to great theologians wrapped in endless questionings, but to "the simple and untaught, those who seek to love God rather than to know many things." Like all the writings of the mystics, it is still fresh with morning dew, unworn by the passing of time, and more modern than the latest essay. He wrote in simple words, as such men always do, setting down what he had learned by living, and his pages are aglow with the light of an eternal dawn. At times they have in them the very light of God:

"He who loves much is great, he who loves less is less; for we are valued in the eyes of God according to the love that is in us. Love is a burning yearning after God, with a wonderful delight and certainty. Love is life, joining together the loving and the loved. Love makes us one with God. Love is the beauty of all virtues. Truth may be without love; but it cannot help without it. Love is perfection of learning, virtue of prophecy, fruit of truth, help of sacraments; riches of pure men; life of dying men."

What do we mean by God? Mere power, greatness, wisdom? If so, we can never love Him, because such things do not win love. Power may crush or command; greatness may awe or amaze; wisdom may confound or astonish. They cannot evoke love. If we are to love God, it is because He is love, else the command is without meaning. Since this is so, where can we see that love most clearly revealed in all its dross-drained purity, save in the life and soul of Jesus? There Love itself looked with human eyes, spake with human lips, felt with a human heart, shed human tears, faced sorrow and death — walked our human way, bringing light at eventide, and breaking the bread of joy! Well may Rolle pray, "O Lord, expand my heart, that it may become wide enough to comprehend Thy love." If this be what God is, how can we help loving Him with all our heart, and mind, and soul?

"O Love divine, that stooped to share
Our sharpest pang, our bitterest tear,
On Thee we cast each earth-born care;
We smile at pain while Thou art near."

VI

THE LAMP OF FELLOWSHIP

"The fellowship of the mystery."—*Eph.* 3:9.

RUSKIN lighted his "Seven Lamps of Architecture" and set them on golden candle-sticks, the better to show us that the laws of building are moral laws, whether they are used in erecting a cathedral or in making a character. If we would build for eternity, he tells us that we must obey Him whose mountain peaks and forest aisles we imitate in our temples. Martineau lighted five "Watch-Night Lamps," in his noble sermon in Hope Street church, and urged us to keep our souls awake watching for the dawn in this "solemn eve of an eternal day which we call Human Life." May we not also light the great Lamp of Fellowship, as we walk together in a twilight world where the way is dim, watching for the Angel of a new and better day?

If we turn to the wise old Bible we find that the word Fellowship lights its pages from end to end, leading from a Garden to the City of God. The genius of the Old Testament is individual, God speaking to patriarch or prophet in the fellowship

of revelation, and receiving the answer, "Here am I." The New Testament knows little of solitary religion. Its gospel is social, its philosophy a friendship, and there is surely a mystery in the words of Jesus when He said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in their midst." In the first Epistle of St. John, which might be called an Epistle of Fellowship, we read these shining words: "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." Indeed, one might sum up the whole of religion in the word Fellowship — a deep and tender fellowship of the soul with God, whose inspiration and help are the supreme facts of life; and then, turning manward, filling all the relations of life with the spirit of sincere and sympathetic fellowship. Truly it has been said,

> "Fellowship is heaven,
> Lack of fellowship is hell."

Now, the law of fellowship is an insight, an experience, an interest, an affection held in common, and no one can live without it — unless he be like that lady in the story of "Stamboul Nights," who lived alone in a house of mirrors, her craving for company satisfied by a thousand reflections of herself. It is a mad world, but, thank heaven, not so mad as that. Normal human beings have what Henry James called "a contributing and participating view of life," and that is the very genius

of fellowship. Albeit both qualities are needed, else the feast is marred, as it always is when one tries to get without giving. Long of old the wise à Kempis said that "he who seeks his own loses the things in common," loses even what he seeks. Fellowship is a necessity of artist and artisan, of the philosopher not less than the saint. Rowland Sill, speaking of his isolation, wrote to a friend: "For my part I long to fall in with somebody. This picket duty is monotonous. I hanker after a shoulder on this side and on the other." Our Yankee poets were accused of having a "mutual admiration society," and it was so. They sang more sweetly in an atmosphere of sympathy and appreciation, each one eager to welcome the work of the others. Such is the need of fellowship by which poets come in clusters and the fine arts travel in groups, and it runs all through our human life.

Deep and passionate is the hunger of the modern man for fellowship, each lonely soul seeking to escape from the cell of self-knowledge into a larger life. Clubs, cults, guilds, crafts, and fraternities without number betray how insistent it is, how importunate. Doors are closed in our face on every side, doors of mystery behind which those entitled to enter hold fellowship in behalf of trade or craft, sharing a common interest, speaking a common language. There are also fellowships of art, of science, of philosophy, each

having its mystery, its community of spirit and purpose by which men are drawn together. As Browning said, God has a few to whom He whispers in the ear,

> "The rest may reason and welcome,
> 'Tis we musicians know;"

and hence the fellowship of the mystery of music. Slowly, after long tragedy, man is learning that it is what he shares that makes life worth living, and that he who seeks his selfish gain at the cost or neglect of his fellows shuts himself up in a prison, hiding the face of God. Vague it is, pervasive as an air, but it is a token of hope:

> "'Tis the World-prayer drawing nearer,
> Claiming universal good,
> Its first faint words sounding clearer,
> Justice, Freedom, Brotherhood."

Here, no less, is a necessity of the life of faith, and it is keenly felt in our time. Never were human bodies so jostled; never were human souls so much alone. Not only alone, but timid, shy, reticent, restless — seeking a vision, a loyalty, a power in common; seeking but finding not. Who does not feel the passion and the pathos of it! Of old it was said, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another," but it is not so among us. Men meet as neighbors, or associates, or friends, in business or in play, and even in works of public welfare, but as sons of the Highest, as

comrades in the spiritual life with needs and aspirations which the ordinary intercourse does not satisfy, how seldom. Bunyan tells of seeing a group of poor women sitting at a door in the sun, talking of divine things, happy in their heavenly gossip. How strange such a group would seem to-day. It may be true, as Stevenson said, that in a world of imperfection we must gladly welcome even partial intimacies, but in these high matters we have almost none at all. Even in church life there is little genuine religious fellowship, such as men enjoyed in other days. Concerning our deepest faith we are strangely silent, as if smitten mute.

No doubt there are many reasons why this is so. Our uncertainty and unsettlement of faith makes us less sure than our fathers were, and less talkative. There is also a fineness of feeling which dreads cant and unreality, a sense of things ineffable of which we may not speak above a whisper; and such a reverence is a sign of hope. We remember how George Eliot was shocked by a famous preacher of her day, who said, "Let us approach the throne of grace," very much as he might have invited you to take a chair. At a time when all Europe was stirred, as it is now, by events that made every conscience tremble after some great principle as a consolation and guide, he dealt in poor and pointless anecdotes, his insight seeing "no further than the retail Chris-

tian's tea and muffins." Truly, her stately, grave and brooding mind was more religious than the preacher to whom she listened — more reverent as it was more profound. Toward the end she came to feel that fellowship is the key to all the bewildering problems of life and religion; that vaster and deeper fellowship which emancipates the soul and makes the heart tender.

This sense of fellowship between God and man, between all ages and both worlds, it is the business of the church to cherish and deepen. Surely, in an age so hungry for fellowship as that in which we live, the church never had a greater opportunity, if only it would light the lamp of fellowship and set it on a candle-stick that it may light the house of life. As it is, the church sets itself to judge men, as its Master never did, building barriers of creed and rite to debar them from "the fellowship of the mystery" wherein lies their redemption. Why should a man like Lincoln, to know whom was a kind of religion, be kept out of the church by its narrow, dogmatic, opinionative attitude? What is a church, if it be not a company of persons seeking harmony with God, and who has a right to set up dogmas and rites to keep out any soul that aspires to that communion? Not identity of opinion about Jesus, His nature, His miracles, the way He came into the world or went out of it, but sympathy with His spirit, His truth, His life of love and ministry, should be the basis

of fellowship in the church to-day, as it was in the beginning.

No failure of the church, and they have been many and tragic, is more sad than its failure in fellowship. If Arius and Athanasius had been more brotherly, both had been nearer the truth as it is in Jesus. Had Calvin and Arminius sat down together in a spirit of fellowship, they would have learned that both were right, and that each needed the other to fulfil his vision. But no, our creeds were deliberately set up to exclude men because they do not think in one way and repeat one form of words, as if any set of words could include the infinity of truth. As Hiram Thomas used to say, one man found an idea and built a church over it, another man did the same thing. Then they began to denounce each other, forgetting that in fellowship the truth is found and in love it must be told. Oh, the pity of it! What wonder that the church has so little influence and leadership in a world in which men are seeking, passionately and pathetically, for fellowship! When the church returns to its first temper, when it offers men what the first believers offered, a union of those who love in the quest and service of the truth, its great moment will come again. As Brierley said, it has centuries of lost time to make up, leagues of wandering to retrace to get back to the radiant fellowship of its morning years, when it was tormented but triumphant, re-

joicing to be counted worthy to be partaker in "the fellowship of His suffering."

Now, think what we have left, as a common inheritance and inspiration, when once we lay aside the little things that divide us, marring our fellowship in the gospel. There is, first of all, the great Book of the Soul whose deep and tender insight "finds us," as Coleridge said, holding a mirror up to our hearts, and showing us what we are in the light of eternity. No other book is so honest with us, none so merciless in its merciful veracity, none so divinely gentle in its austerity. Its pages seem "full of eyes," and open it wherever you may, you start back in surprise or terror, feeling "this book knows all about us; it eyes us meaningly; it is a discerner of the thoughts of the heart." Across our fitful days it throws a white light that never was on sea or land, and its leaves rustle with the free, original, ancient breath of the upper world. It is the book of common prayer, an oracle of righteousness, telling us in unutterable words, in tales and whispered histories, of that fellowship of the soul with the eternal in which lies our hope on earth and our destiny beyond, when the day is done and the tent is struck in "the dim half-light of evening broken by homing wings."

There is the high office of the ministry, the speech of man to man concerning the life of the soul, an oratory of faith. Often the man of the

pulpit is like the minister in the weird Hawthorne story who wore a thick veil over his face, his muffled words half audible and his lips unseen. But there are times when the veil drops and soul speaks face to face with soul in an ineffable sacrament of fellowship, more intimate, even in a multitude, than the most private speech. Robert Hall, in private, could hardly speak of religion at all. Nor could Alexander Maclaren. But for both the pulpit was a confessional, as it was with Phillips Brooks. How strange it is that one can speak freely in public of things too intimate for personal converse. Yet so it is, and here lies the great opportunity and efficacy of the pulpit, and its awful responsibility. A knightly gentleman of the court of Queen Elizabeth said to a young poet, "Look into thy heart and write." Every man, in his highest life, must in large measure be alone, but if he looks into his heart and speaks of what he finds there, telling what God has taught him in the silence, others will listen as if their own souls were speaking.

How can one speak of the sacrament of sweet song, in which we are made partakers of a communion which over-arches our little sects like the sky, admitting us unto a fellowship of ages of victorious vision and hope — those dear, haunting hymns which hold in their familiar lines the echoes of voices long hushed? With what words can one tell of the fellowship of prayer, by which

we are lifted, as on a shining Jacob ladder, out of our loneliness into the unity and liberty of faith? What most offended George Eliot in the popular preacher to whom she listened, was this sentence, "We feel no love to God because He hears the prayers of others; it is because He hears my prayers that I love Him." She knew, skeptic though she has been called, that all true prayer is common prayer, each praying for all, and all for each one; as in the prayer which Jesus taught us it is "Our Father, our bread, our sins," joining our hearts with our poor humanity in its aspiration and need. No one can forget those words in "Daniel Deronda," which march like noble music and tell more profound truth than many a sermon:

"The most powerful movement of feeling with a liturgy is the prayer which seeks for nothing special, but is a yearning to escape from the limitations of our own weakness, and an invocation of all Good to enter and abide with us, or else a self-oblivious lifting up of gladness, a Gloria in Excelsis that such good exists; both the yearning and the exaltation gathering their utmost force from the sense of communion in a form which has expressed them both for long generations of struggling fellow-men."

There is, besides, a sense in which one may believe for another, as when a young Scotchman said, "I am a Christian because Marcus Dods is one;" a vicarious faith, so to name it, by which

a sweet religious soul fortifies and reinforces the faith of his fellows. Even St. Paul, writing to the Romans, longed to "be comforted together with you by the mutual faith of you and me." Here, again, the office of the ministry finds its field. Never has that office been better described than in the line in the Tennyson poem, in speaking of one of the knights of the Round Table: "He laid his mind on theirs, and they believed in his beliefs." Many a man in Boston believed in God because Phillips Brooks believed in Him. Indeed, a workingman of that city wrote to say that when he thought of God, and wondered what He was, it always came back to his thinking of the man of Trinity Church infinitely enlarged in every way. What a tribute both to the character of a man and the power of the Lamp of Fellowship to kindle other hearts — which has been true all down the ages, as we may trace in the genealogy of our Christian faith.

Wisely has it been said that they see not the clearest who see all things clear, and that is nowhere more true than when we think of Christ. St. Paul did not try to define Christ, as the manner of some is, knowing that when all is said He is a Mystery. If Arnold could say of Shakespeare that he outtops our knowledge, how much more true is it of one to whom St. Paul bowed as a mystery unfathomable, a height immeasurable, a wonder unspeakable. What rapture he had in

his ministry — willing to be all things to all men if by any art of strategy he might lead them to know the love of God in Christ, which passes knowledge! If only the church would follow its great evangelist, not seeking to define Christ, much less to defend Him, but to win men to live His life, trust His truth, and follow in His way, its ancient joy would return. Its life would be renewed and its sects forgotten in a fellowship in which there is room for every type of mind, healing for every hurt of heart, and the answer to the prayer of the poet-preacher:

"Gather us in, Thou Love that fillest all!
Gather our rival faith within Thy fold!
Rend each man's temple veil and bid it fall,
That we may know that Thou hast been of old;
Gather us in!
Gather us in! we worship only Thee;
In varied names we stretch a common hand;
In diverse forms a common soul we see:
In many ships we seek one spiritland;
Gather us in!"

VII

THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

"The whole family in heaven and earth."—*Eph.* 3:15.
"We, who are many, are one body."—*Rom.* 12:5.
"Fellow-citizens with the saints."—*Eph.* 2:19

IF we judge a man by the depth of his insight, the daring of his devotion, and the impress of his life upon the race, St. Paul was one of the greatest men the world has known. Fragile of frame, vivid of mind, and creative of faith, his unquenchable passion was only equalled by the profundity of his thought. The secret of his life lay in two discoveries, the greatest ever made, the discovery of God and the discovery of mankind — the Love of God and the unity of humanity. These two truths, made luminous in the life of Jesus, became the master lights of all his seeing and the basis of his philosophy of history. In labor always, in perils oft, and with "the care of all the churches," he left no lengthy treatise, but only letters written swiftly, like the poems of Burns, mingling practical exhortation with spiritual exposition. But when his flashing insights are brought together into a glow-point, they form a grand and far-reaching vision.

There have been many expositors of St. Paul, some of them among the noblest thinkers of the church, but in our time the man who more than all others revealed the depth and sweep of his vision was not a theologian. For some of us certain sayings of the Apostle bring back a dear and honored teacher, who was one of the few great thinkers the New World has known, Josiah Royce — the sturdy figure, the dome-like forehead, the starry eyes, and the voice that haunts us still. He united the genius of one of the most advancing and catholic of thinkers with the simplicity and spontaneity of a child. Kindness was the spirit of his life. His service to the truth was a humble devotion, and he was equally devoted to his philosophy and to his friends. He was a saint among philosophers, most lovable and human, and was never more happy than when telling a story to a group of children — his favorite being "The Hunting of the Snark." His last act before leaving for Oxford was to go into the park that "he might say good-by to his friends, the little birds, who had sung their songs to a stranger from over the sea." For his pupils the memory of him is like music, and the validity of his vision was attested by the purity of his character not less than by his heroic fortitude in those last dark days.

Such was the thinker who, standing midway between Hegel and James, brought his insight to the service of faith, setting the vision of St. Paul in

the vast frame of modern thought. His teaching, on its religious side, was all summed up in his vision of the Beloved Community and his Gospel of Loyalty to its faith and fellowship. First he studied the teachings of Jesus in the parables and in the sermons by the sea, finding its essence to be Love. But love, as Jesus taught it and lived it, was no pale, passive negation — far from it! Instead, it is active, resolute, heroic, "as positive and strenuous as it is humane," not only pure but purifying, not jam but a subtle and vivid power which men find it as hard to define as to resist. Jesus founded no church, as we use the word, but a fellowship of loving hearts to extend the Kingdom of Heaven which cometh not with observation, whose members were to be evangelists of good-will, teaching love to all men, each beginning with his neighbor. But this plan, etched and left unfinished in the words of Jesus, left unsolved many problems as to how it is to be worked out in respect of great social issues.

Manifestly, a design so vast, so profound, and so simple withal, needed a great mind to grasp it, and it found that mind in St. Paul. What did St. Paul do, what could he do, more than repeat the truth of the Master? Did he add anything to Christianity, alter it, as some insist, changing it into something unlike what the Master taught, if not alien to it? Not so. Here the insight of Royce went fathoms deeper than the critics of St.

Paul. So far from changing Christianity, St. Paul, by his creative insight and experience, added to the truth which Jesus taught, the truth of what Jesus was, and is, and ever shall be, made known in the revelation of His death and the reality of His living presence. To his mind — to his heart — a revelation has been made. There is a Beloved Community established, a community of memory, of service, of hope, of interpretation. Its indwelling spirit is concrete and loving. It is the Body of Christ. The risen Lord dwells in it, and is its life. It is as much a person as He was when He walked the earth. Men must love that community; let its spirit, through their love, become their own. They must be one in Him and with Him, and with His community — hence the age-long, ceaseless evangel to win men to this fellowship.

Of course, so bare a sketch of the vision of St. Paul, as interpreted by Royce, gives little hint of its variegated richness and splendor. His doctrine of Interpretation is alone worthy of long pondering, as is his defense, one by one, of almost every truth of essential evangelical Christianity. The Beloved Community, as Royce saw it, is not any organized church, but the invisible fellowship of loyal souls all the world over, past, present and to come. The actuating spirit of this community is Christ, as St. Paul understood Him, in whom the whole body is compact and knit together; and by

that spirit, which is the spirit of love, God is interpreted to every man, and every man interpreted to himself and to his neighbor. Royce regarded the statement, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," as central in philosophy, as well as in the Christian creed; but he gave to all this a meaning which cannot be used to support the claims of any sect or church. His Holy Catholic Church was real but essentially invisible, and for that reason he held aloof, perhaps unwisely, from all bodies, whether orthodox or otherwise, regarding them as the breeding places of animosities which were opposed to the religion of the spirit. He summed up his teachings as to the fellowship of love in two maxims:

"The first of our practical maxims is: Simplify your traditional Christology, in order to enrich its spirit. The name of Christ has always been, for the Christian believer, the symbol of the spirit in whom the faithful — that is to say the loyal — always are and have been one. Hold fast by that faith. The simple historical fact has always been this, that in some fashion and degree, those who have believed in the being called Christ, were united in a community of the faithful, even in love with that community, even hopefully and practically devoted to the cause of the still invisible, but perfectly real and divine community, and were saved by the faith and the life they thus expressed.

"My second maxim is: Look forward to the human and visible triumph of no form of the Christian church. Still less look to any sect, new or old, as the conqueror. The future task of religion is the task of inventing and applying arts which shall win men over to unity, and which shall overcome their original hatefulness by the gracious love, not of mere individuals, but of communities. Now such arts are still to be discovered. Judge every social device, every proposed reform, every national and every local enterprise, by the one test: Does this help towards the coming of the universal community?"

Truly it is a grand conception, worthy of the faith of a great philosopher; a church towering above our sects like a Gothic cathedral above the sand-house built by the little baby in the Kipling story. It recognizes the creative genius of fellowship. It is a communion, as Royce held, in which socialist and individualist, absolutist and pragmatist, are drawn together into a higher harmony. For our churches, especially, it is at once a test and a judgment of value, since they exist to make the invisible communion visible — not by exalting the church as it is, or by founding new sects, but by winning men to the Beloved Community. Whether a man is a member of this sect or the other is not important, but whether he is a citizen of that Divine Society which is the hope of humanity. For each of us, now and always, the

great task is to aid towards the coming of the universal community by helping to make the work of religion not only as catholic, but as inventive of new social arts, as progressive, as natural science is now. So shall we help in the making, not only of happy individuals, but of a unity of spirits at once free and loyal, in the service of a Society which humbles one by its majesty and lifts one by its fellowship.

How can each do his bit in this behalf? By simple Loyalty, which in the vision of Royce became a Gospel — such Loyalty as united the family, the clan, the tribe, the nation, exalted and devoted to the common good: "the willing and thorough-going devotion of a self to a cause, when the cause is something which unites many selves in one, and which is therefore the interest of a community." What Socrates meant by reason, what Solomon meant by wisdom, St. John by love, St. Paul by grace, Luther by faith, Fénelon by virtue, Royce meant by his great word Loyalty. His exposition of it was like a musician touching the keys of a great organ, evoking elusive, incalculable, and haunting melodies; and what he taught in his words he revealed in his life. To read his pages, and still more to hear his voice, so eager, so eloquent, was to have a new sense of the greatness of life when it devotes the utmost to the highest. Also, it was to feel the exaltation, the solemnity and joy of a vast fellow-

ship of the brave, far-seeing and true hearted of all ages — like that " cloud of witnesses " which St. Paul beheld watching him as he ran his race and fought for his faith.

To-morrow is the birthday of Lincoln, a great day in the calendar of this republic on which we pay homage to the tallest soul who has walked in this New World. Wherein was Lincoln great, and why does humanity regard him as one of its supreme, sacrificial spirits? Not because he was wiser than Webster or more eloquent than Clay; not because he had a larger knowledge or a stronger will; but because his was a more devoted consecration, a more entire dedication, a clearer vision to see the way God was going and the loyalty to walk in that way. As we see him on the distant slopes of fame, all now know that the Union — the common good and the common destiny — was the one overmastering idea of his life, and that whoever else might let go of faith, or sink into self-seeking, or play fast and loose with truth, that would Lincoln never! He was loyal to his vision of a great beloved Community, united and free, and willing to pay " the last full measure of devotion " in its behalf. One day a delegation of ministers waited on Lincoln to tell him his duty, and the following colloquy is reported:

" I hope, Mr. Lincoln, that God is on our side," said the spokesman.

" That does not concern me," said the President.

"What, it does not concern you to have God on your side?" asked the minister.

"No," said Lincoln, "what concerns me is that we should be on God's side."

Now that was much more than a mere play upon words; it goes to the very heart of the difference between a true and a false religion. The false view is that we have got something we want to do in the world, and we want the alliance of the Almighty to help us, or at least not to interfere. The truer, profounder view is that God is in His world, at work on a great design, and that we must learn His will and His way, and work with Him, divining, in the measure of our ability, His purpose and our duty and destiny. What is God doing in America to-day? Has He put us here to build railroads, dig mines, erect bridges? Is that all? Or are we here by mere chance, each man to seek his own end, follow his own path, and the end of it a moral and social anarchy? Or has He some great plan for our republic, some purpose to fulfil in this new world, which we should seek to know and work with? If so, loyalty to that Divine purpose for our nation is the only true patriotism, that through our republic we may the better serve a universal humanity. For what does America exist if it be not to build in the new world a Beloved Community, united, just and free, where men of every race and every creed may live and live well! For this our fathers broke new roads and kept old

faiths; of this all our mountains are monuments and all our sunsets banners!

Once more, again and yet again, we come back to the profound conception of Royce, and the deeper vision of St. Paul which he expounded. At first it looks like a mere dream, a divine romance, but, like the Raphael painting, when we look at it more closely the cloud is seen to be made up of innumerable faces. There shine the heroic souls who have ascended from the moral battle-fields of time, many of them unknown and unsung here below. It is the one true eternal Church, one family in heaven and on earth, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. Whatever betide, let us seek fellowship in the Beloved Community, love it, labor for it, and be loyal to it with a loyalty that never wavers whatever winds may blow. Our little systems have their day and cease to be, but the fellowship of the noble and true-hearted endures.

> "O blest Communion, fellowship divine,
> We feebly struggle; they in glory shine,
> Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine."

VIII

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

"The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught as one having authority."— *Matt.* 7 : 28, 29.

"By what authority doest thou these things?"— *Mark* 11 : 28.

NO doubt my title to-day is unfortunate, in that it may easily suggest a debated point in theology. Whereas it is no part of my wish to indulge in any dispute, but to make clear, so far as in me lies, the reality and benignity of the authority of Jesus. It is matter for deep regret that this question should ever have been made a kind of puzzle. No; it is not a matter of argument, but of religious experience. When men asked Jesus as to His authority, He did not answer. He knew the human heart, and He knew that such men were really seeking some pretext for getting away from His truth. Just so it is to-day, and the effort is as vain now as ever it was in days of old.

Of no word are the men of our age more shy than the word authority, and yet they are always quoting authorities. Even the men who, as Bacon said, are "so sensible of every kind of restraint

that they go near to think their girdles and garters to be bonds and shackles," take the facts of science on the authority of men of science. There are men who call themselves free-thinkers, and in the sense that no one has a right to dictate what we should think, every man is or ought to be free. It is like saying that two and two make four. Nevertheless, in the deeper sense there is no such thing as a free-thinker — unless, indeed, we elect to hold as true only that which suits our fancy or whim. Every man who seeks the truth, with any hope of finding it, is bound by facts and the laws of the mind. Nor will he find much truth if he is unwilling to trust the insight of deeper minds than his own.

Clearly, it is not the fact of authority, but certain kinds of authority, that men repudiate in our day. Let it be said at once that not one of the objections to authority now urged has the least bearing upon the authority of Jesus. They simply do not touch it. If we are to take Jesus as the Lord and Leader of the soul, it will be because He *is* that to us. No amount of argument or evidence can make Him so. That is to say, the question of this hour is a question of fact, and we must not allow it to be obscured by raising a dust about an abstract idea. That is an old and easy device. How strange that men in quest of freedom of soul should turn from the one free soul in history, and the Teacher of the truth that makes men free.

It must be that they are seeking freedom from faith, not freedom of faith. Let us study to-day the fact of the authority of Jesus, and the nature of it.

Now the people who heard Jesus speak in the days of His flesh had no doubt of His authority. They felt that He somehow had the right to interfere with their personal lives. What amazed the people, however, dismayed and enraged their official teachers. While Jesus taught with authority, the scribes taught by authorities, a very different thing. What He said the souls of men affirmed to be true; what they said needed to be proved by a catena of references to the rabbis. Nor is that all. Even the enemies of Jesus did not deny the fact of His authority. Their very question was a confession of it. They did not question the fact of His authority, but asked to know the nature of it and who gave it to Him. So long as Jesus limited Himself to teaching they stood aside and listened in a temper of anger. But when He proceeded to act by driving the money-changers out of the temple, they were forced to bestir themselves to save their own prestige. Still, so far from denying His authority, they only demanded to know whence He had received it.

No more can men to-day deny the strange, sweet sovereignty of Jesus over the soul. Often they order their lives in ways which He does not approve, but they do so with a haunting sense of

moral uneasiness. They may go on as though they were at peace, making effort to be gay and forget. But every man of us knows that they are not at peace. They know all the time that it is all wrong, and that they are acting a hard part with poor success. When they sit down to the feast of life, nothing has its true relish so long as they know that there is One whom they cannot ask to sit with them. There are those to-day who deny that Jesus ever lived. Nevertheless, that averted Face gives them a certain secret trouble of heart, such as a man feels when he sets himself to do what he knows is wrong. The fact is indisputable, and the question before us is the same as that asked of old, albeit in a different spirit: By what authority hast Thou this sway over our souls?

For one thing, it is not the authority of mere force. Jesus is to faith what art is to beauty. He carries no whip. He issues no edict. His words are less a command than an invitation. He does not drive like a despot; He leads like a lover. Nothing is more alien to Him than to violate the liberty of the soul, or to invade its sanctity. He stands at the door and knocks. Though ages have passed since He walked here below, He is still here — nearer, it often seems, than in the days agone. Without coercing us, He dominates us. Without breaking our wills, He imposes His wiser and sweeter will, and in our hearts we bow to it. How

can such a thing be? All we know is that it is a fact, and that we cannot rid ourselves of the soft pressure of His spirit upon us. If He rules it is not by force, but by the power of Truth joined to an infinite Love. There is in His words a wooing tone as of great music, and as we listen our own souls seem to rise up and rebuke us for not obeying.

Still less is it the authority of place or office. A cathedral is an embodiment of the aspiration of humanity, its altar a fireside of the soul, its spire a prayer in stone. But Jesus never taught in a cathedral. So far as we know He never entered the Holy of Holies, but spoke only in the outer court of the Temple. He never ministered at an altar, never preached in a consecrated place. He taught in homes, by the wayside, from the bow of a fishing boat, and on the mountains. Where He was, God was. It was not a matter of place, but of Presence. Jesus was a layman. He was never set apart as a priest or rabbi. His dress was that of the people in their everyday life. No stately shrine, no solemn ritual, no echoing anthems, no ascending altar-smoke, added impressiveness to His presence or weight to His great and simple words.

Nor was the authority of Jesus such as derives from either tradition or learning. There is a sense in which He stood in a shining tradition of prophetic power and vision. Yet in the strict sense Jesus was not a prophet, but, rather, the ful-

filment of what prophets had forefelt and foretold. Tradition as such had little weight with Him. "It has been written — *but I say unto you,*" were words often on His lips, and always He added a deeper, more searching insight. He did something more than simply shift the allegiance of men from one master to another — even from Moses the revered to Jesus the reviled. No, His demand was a great deal more drastic than that. He transferred the seat of religious authority from *without* the human soul to the secret place *within.* He set little store by the external sanctions to which the rabbis appealed. Antiquity was no authority. He asked men to take His truth to heart and test it, telling them that if any man *will do* he shall *know.* Let a man do that and he will hear the awful echo of the truth, rising and falling like the sound of a sunken bell, in the depths of his soul.

As for learning, we think of Socrates as the prince of dialecticians who could reduce a sophist to a heap of white ashes with effortless ease. We marvel at the subtle, deep-probing intellect of Kant. We are astonished at the myriad-minded genius of Shakespeare, and the encyclopedic culture of Goethe. Much as we admire these men, something more than a fear of irreverence makes us shudder at the thought of comparing them with Jesus. Resentment at its utter incongruity keeps

us from doing it. They tell us many things concerning which He was silent; but in the deeper sense of knowledge; in the knowledge of that which matters most, that which brings peace and gives power, His place would be solitary save that He lived and died to make that knowledge the salvation of the soul and the life of the race. Not only so, but all of these noble intellects bowed to Jesus as the master of lore deeper than they knew, and which they found to be their help in life and hope in death.

Once more, how can such a thing be? Why is it that, after reading other books with their dim guesses at the riddle of life, when we turn to the words of Jesus we feel that here, at last, is the *truth* about life and death? Why, indeed, if it be not that His authority over us is due to a certain kinship between what He is, and what we, in spite of all things, are and are to be? In the nature of things, such authority is measured by and responsive to the nature of those over whom it is exercised. This law operates over the whole arena of human life, determining at once our comradeship and our allegiance. He is what we want to be, long to be, and in every dross-drained hour pray to be, therefore His scepter of authority over us. He used no arguments, He only appealed to the heart. He had no system, and His speech is so simple that we forget how it was said in the joy of

its liberating grace. His fearless love solves the riddle of life, and His quiet presence makes us aware of God and the one way to Him.

"Who art Thou?" he was asked of old, and His answer was, "Whom say *ye* that I am?" It is as if He had said, looking eagerly, almost wistfully, into their hearts for any sign of a new life, "Am I anything to you? Have I made you ill at ease with your old life? Have I rebuked the evil within you, making it harder for you to do wrong? Do I make it easier for you to see the true and do the right? If so, I am so far God to you, and your Saviour. Act loyally on what I have become to you. Let it take you as far as it would like to take you. Do I impress you as the Way of Life and help you on toward what is best? Do not stop to argue. Be obedient to that inner impulse, that vision of truer life which has come to you through me, and you will find firmer ground." The only authority which Jesus claims over us is the authority which we ourselves are prepared to grant Him. Once we admit, as we cannot help doing, that He has a place in our lives, the door stands ajar. If only we would open the door and let Him have His way with us, the house of our life would become a House of Peace.

Jesus has authority over us, first, *by virtue of what He taught.* No wonder the people felt the need of a scribe no longer. Here was a teacher who did not prove His teaching, simply because

it needs no proof. His words are their own authority. They have but to be heard for the soul of man to declare them to be true. Jesus had truth for His authority, and did not need any authority for His truth. Nothing is more certain than that He did nothing to compel belief. His teaching took hold of men and mastered them by the authority of Truth itself. Recall the words of the Great Prayer, or such sayings as these:

"The kingdom of heaven is within you. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Whosoever wants to save his life will lose it, and whosoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another. When ye stand praying, forgive."

Those familiar words ring just as true to-day as when they were spoken, quietly and calmly, to the simple folk of long ago. They were true before the pyramids were built. They will be true when the Sphinx has crumbled to a heap of sand. They do not need the name of Moses, or even the name of Jesus, to endow them with everlasting authority. Jesus said them because they are true. To try to prove them would be like gilding gold or arguing that a sunset is lovely. We may deny the words of Jesus, but we only hurt ourselves. We may turn pragmatists and say that they will not work. It does not matter. They are as true as the stars

in their orbits, and they will shine over the tomb of every glib philosophy that denies them.

Also, Jesus has a right to rule over us by *virtue of what He did*. When we face the awful ills of life, when we come near death, or near something which may be worse, what helps us most? Not exhortation, not theory, not dogma, not advice, good as each of these may be. What helps us most is the victory won in a like woe by another who has preceded us. Who fathomed the deepest depth of human woe? What human tragedy, no matter how grey and bitter, goes beyond the Garden of Gethsemane? Not even Hamlet would dare speak of his desperate experience in presence of that dark Cross outside the city gate. Of all the deep pages of Mark Rutherford, none surpasses that scene in "Catherine Furze" where she reads the last three chapters of Matthew to the dying servant girl. When she came to the story of the empty tomb, she felt, and Phoebe felt, as millions have felt before, and other millions will feel in times to be, that this is the truth of death. Of a truth Jesus knew the dim paths, the dark waters, and the bitter, old, and awful reality. Out of what He lived and suffered He spoke, and which of us can deny His words?

What He taught, that He was. No wonder His example has more authority with men than all the books of philosophy ever written by man. No wonder the friendless, the unloved, the disap-

pointed, the baffled, and the world-broken, seeing His pure, calm, heroic image, take new hold on life. That is why those who walk alone in far places, those whose destiny has not fitted their dreams, those who thirst for larger things but cannot escape from their narrow circle, those who know nothing but dull routine, and would welcome death if it were for a cause; lonely souls in the obscurity of great cities or remote hamlets; sinful souls who have wandered afar and lost their way — all these turn to Him and find themselves in Him. His words are music, but His life and death are the medicine of healing to their souls.

Again, Jesus speaks with authority *by virtue of what He was*. The highest truth can never be wholly uttered in any form of words. It needs the greater width of character, the depth of personality, the reality of life. Only the "word made flesh" can tell us the ultimate truth as to what life is, and what it is worth. The authority of Jesus is that power of God, so strangely gentle and winning, which inheres in the purely Good. As Marius the Epicurean lay dying, he tried to analyze the influence of Jesus upon the world. Before the end came he saw that by His life there had been established in the world a permanent protest, a plea, against any low or mean view of life we may be tempted to take. Like the boy who grew up among the Alps, and who afterwards became a great artist. In every one of his paintings

one sees those far-shining peaks, as if he saw all life against a background of the mountains. Having seen the life of Jesus, our humanity can never be as though it had not seen it. Over all the ages its towering sublimity holds sway.

Not only for what He was, but also, and much more, by *virtue of what He is,* Jesus has authority over us. That One Face, said Browning, so far from vanishing, rather grows. Who is it that suffers *within you* when you deny or betray the highest? Is it not the ideal Man that you are striving to make real — that pure-souled, deep-hearted, clear-visioned Man that one day, by the grace of God, you will be? This ideal Man who suffers in you, and at some time in the hearts of all men, is in league with Him who was the Lamb slain before the world was, by whose suffering humanity is emancipated and cleansed. Nor will you ever find peace of heart until you yield yourself to the authority of that Christ who is forming in you, the hope of glory.

IX

CHRIST ALL AND IN ALL

"Christ is all and in all."—*Col.* 3: 11.

THESE words, written by St. Paul from his prison in Rome when he was an old man near his end, show us a spirit serene, benign and mellow, undaunted by life and undismayed by death. They are memorable words, summing up what years of obedience to the heavenly vision had taught him, making his experience a revelation and his faith a philosophy. Not only had the vision remained undimmed, but it had become more radiant, until, at eventide, there was light all round the sky. It is therefore that we listen to his words, not as to one who spins a curious theory or makes an idle guess, but one who had thought deeply and lived profoundly. Such words are more than eloquent, for that they have within them the insight of a long life of high, heroic service, vision-led and Christ-illumined.

There had come to Rome a man named Epaphras, who told the aged Apostle how the little church at Colosse was being led astray by wily teachers of error. As between fanatical Hebrew

literalists and dreamy Oriental occultists the saints of that city were sorely troubled, not knowing what to do. Hence this Epistle, which is a kind of exposition of the prologue of the Gospel of St. John, setting forth the Eternal Christ as the image of the invisible God by whom all things were created and in whom all things hold together. Over against the legalists who would petrify faith into a form, and the occultists who would melt good and evil into a blur, it unveils Christ as the creative ideal of the universe, the redemptive reality of humanity, and the prophetic hope of the world. For depth and grasp and grandeur, not less than for its portrayal of the new life required of us, this Epistle has hardly an equal even in the writings of St. Paul.

Surely, if its ruling insight can be made real and vivid to each of us, commanding the assent and homage of our hearts, the hour will have been well spent. Let us see a little. What kind of a nation would this be if every man in it were such a man as Lincoln, true of heart, clear of mind, living with malice toward none and charity for all, seeking the sanctity and safety of the Republic? Social slavery and industrial brutality would cease to exist. Laws would be wise and just and merciful, giving to each his right and leaving every one free to stretch his arms and his soul. No woman would be made desolate, no little child forlorn, by

grasping greed or grinding cruelty. It would indeed be the nation it was meant to be, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the ideal that all men are created equal, entitled to equal justice and opportunity for life and happiness. Because this mighty and tender spirit took form in Lincoln, his life was a revelation of the genius and purpose of the Republic, its reason for being, and its prophecy for times to come. Nor will its mission be fulfilled till all men under its flag are such men as he, if not in genius, at least in spirit and ideal.

Just so, looking out over the far horizons of time, St. Paul saw all the groaning æons of nature, all the groping ages of history, moving toward one point of light, one "far off Divine event." Through all the dim dreams of centuries, he saw the soul of man pointing, like the needle of a compass, to the life of Christ as the Divine ideal, which is at once the reason for the universe and the revelation of its purpose. Like Aristotle, he saw that nature is a realm of ends, and that "it is the Perfect Man, in whom the thought of God is clear, who is the measure of all things." Hence his vision of Christ as the crown, the climax, the consummation of all things, the whole finding focus in a single luminous life, as we may find infinity in a grain of sand and eternity in an hour. Much else there may be in the majestic infinitudes of God which can have no likeness in man, how-

ever exalted; but of that we can never know, since we have in us no key to it. But the quality of God, as distinguished from His quantity; His spirit, His purpose, His pity, and most of all His character, without which His power is mere force — these are revealed in the life of Jesus!

Christ, then, is all that we really know of God, as He is all that we need for nobility of life and hope in death; and if we lay it to heart that the Divine Ideal, as St. Paul held, is that all shall at last be like Him, life lights up like an aurora. For this nature exists; for this suns rise and set, and flowers grow, and seas drift and sing — that man may realize the divine dream revealed in Christ! Such is the ultimate purpose of God and the immortal hope of humanity, but it could never come true in any life, much less in all, unless the second part of the text were as true as the first. What the theologians have taught of the uniqueness and supremacy of Christ is true, profoundly and gloriously true. 'Tis well that we sing it, and rest in it, rejoicing in the measureless promise of it. Only, to the vision of Athanasius and Augustine we must add the insight of Channing and Emerson. Christ is all, but He is also in all — His image and superscription upon every human soul, something in the very nature of man which will not let him rest till the ideal in which he was created is realized. It must be so, else Christ were not truly all:

"Held our eyes no sunny sheen,
How could God's own light be seen?
Dwelt no power Divine within us,
How could God's divineness win us?"

St. Paul was a fundamental democrat. He held that if we dig deep enough into the nature of man, down below race, rank, sex and social condition, below the debris of sin and the sediments of sensuality, we find that the foundation element of humanity is the image of Christ in the soul. Dim it may be, blurred by evil, and overlaid by many a foul and slimy thing, but it is there as the deepest reality. Hence his saying that the profoundest fact about humanity is not that it is Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female, but that Christ is all and in all. For St. Paul, a Jew, this truth was the sovereign mystery, hidden from the foundation of the world, and at last made manifest in Christ. Hitherto he had thought the Hebrews the only people for whom God had any purpose, and when he saw that purpose, as it unfolded, extending to all races and clans, it filled him with inextinguishable wonder. Yet he followed the truth as it is in Jesus, even against all his old prejudices, and against the narrow teachers of his day who tried to limit the Gospel — in many keys and tones making plea for a universal Christ as the savior of a universal humanity.

All humanity! Who is not smitten dumb by a vision of all who live now, all who have ever

lived, all who are yet to live in the unknown future! One generation goes and another generation comes, myriad following myriad until we grow faint and dizzy at thought of a host no man can number. Still they pour upon the earth, pass across it, and vanish — as if they had stepped off the edge of the earth into an abyss. Some walk lightly and gladly along the old-worn way; others trudge slowly and sadly, stooping under heavy burdens of care. For all life is brief, and for all it seems to end in the grave. Whence do they come, and why? Whither do they go? What is their fate? What is the meaning of it all? Has it a meaning? Or did the Great Spirit when He took clay and made man, play with it? Only as we see that endless procession in the light of the Gosepl of Christ, do we find a clue. If all were created by God for sonship to Himself, and each for an inheritance in His eternal life, then there is light and hope. Such was the vision which filled the heart of St. Paul with joy, sending him to the ends of the earth with its good news!

Wonderful it is, towering above the vague Cosmic Mysticism of our day like a Gothic cathedral above a doll-house. But how can the Infinite dwell in the finite? Ask, rather, how it can be otherwise, since if we live at all it is God who lives in us, even as we live in Him? Every soul is like a tiny inlet of the sea. Looking landward, it is finite. Looking seaward, it is

linked with the Infinite. Time was when men drew two circles; one was God, the other Man, and they did not touch. If Christ was placed in one, He could not be in the other. To-day we are beginning to see that those two circles not only touch, but overlap. That is why, when we read the story of Jesus, we are touched to wistfulness, as if it were a history of the life we have dreamed. No romance, no tale of old heroism, stirs us like that biography of Love, that memoir of Mercy, and as we read, ere long we are praying softly,

> "And oh for a man to rise in me,
> That the man I am may cease to be."

Evermore He haunts us, hovers over us, because there is in each of us a hidden, unformed, possible Christ, an image of Him to reveal which is the destiny of all.

Three centuries ago there was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, a lad named Henry Scrougall, the son of a bishop, who entered the University at fifteen and was made Professor of Philosophy at the age of twenty. He died in 1678, when twenty-eight years old, leaving only a tiny book entitled "The Life of God in the Soul of Man." For years I looked for that little book, but was never able to find it until I visited the British Museum, where I saw the first edition and also an American reprint of 1868. The last edition contained a letter, not found in the first, in which he lamented

that among so many pretenders to religion, so few understand what it means. Some place it, he said, in the understanding, in orthodox notions and opinions — he might have said liberal notions as well — and all the account they can give of their religion is that they belong to this or the other sect into which Christendom is unhappily divided. Others place it in outward rites and duties. If they live peaceably with their neighbors, keep a temperate diet, observe the returns of worship, and occasionally extend their hands to the relief of the poor, they think they have sufficiently acquitted themselves. Others, again, put all religion in the affections, in rapturous heats and ecstatic devotion; and all they aim at, is to pray with passion, and think of heaven with pleasure, and to be affected with those kind and melting expressions wherewith they court their Saviour. But he had a deeper insight.

"True religion is the union of the soul with God, a real participation of the divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul; or, in the Apostle's phrase, it is Christ formed within us. Briefly, I know not how the nature of religion can be more fully expressed than by calling it a Divine Life — the life of God in the soul of man."

Because this is so, because in each of us there is a dim image of Him whom we follow, no one need be long unaware of what is required of him. Linking the highest truth with the humblest duties,

the Apostle urges us to put off the things that obscure or mar the Christ-ideal within us, and to seek the things that are above, forbearing one another, forgiving one another; and above all to "put on charity, which is the bond of completeness." So interpreted, our life is like that figure carved by Polasek to symbolize the work of a man in forming his own personality — a huge giant imprisoned in a stone, his head and hands free, laboriously setting himself free by chipping away the stone. If that which we have of God within ourselves by nature, or to which we can by our own efforts attain, is not adequate — and it is inadequate, as all know — He whose we are and whose image lives in us, will enlighten and inspire us by His grace. By yielding to His spirit, by making His will our own, our desires are deeper, our tastes finer, our love purer, our vision clearer, and His gentleness and strength dwell in us, shaping our lives after His image and ideal.

There remains the great prophetic hope. If Christ is indeed all and in all, if His image is impressed upon every soul, however marred it may be, then let us not fear to follow where this faith points. If this be so, sometime, somewhere, somehow, by the love of God which hath in it the secret of unknown redemptions, that ideal will be realized. Ages of imperfection lie behind, and other ages may lie ahead, but the dream of God will come true at last. He who purposed through

Christ to reconcile the race unto Himself, will not fail, cannot fail. If God be God His dream will not end in defeat. The infinite is His realm, eternity His work-day, and stronger is His love than earth or hell. Tennyson touched the deep springs of this forward-looking faith when he wrote,

> "The wish that of the living whole
> No life may fail beyond the grave,
> Derives it not from what we have,
> The likest God within the soul?"

Even so, Christ in us is the basis of our faith for to-day, not less than of our hope for "to-morrow, to-morrow, and to-morrow." Finally, after æons of effort, by the wise strategy of the love that will not let us go, humanity will be brought, not blindly, not by force impelled, but freely, gladly, surely, to the ideal of Him who created it in love and holiness; and God will be all and in all.

X

ANOTHER CHRIST

"He appeared unto them in another form."—*Mark* 16:12.

OF all pages in the Bible, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, none is more fascinating to me, none more revealing, than the story of the walk to Emmaus. It is an epitome of Christian history and experience. There we have the three things that make our life worth while: the Divine Companion, the sufficient interpretation, and the mighty answer of the heart. Nowhere else do we see more plainly the sundering difference between the Bible and all other books that speak to man about things eternal. Rich, warm, ineffably beautiful, the Bible is the Book of the Presence.

This is clear, whatever else be dim: since Jesus lived our human life has been a walk to Emmaus, often lonely and sad, but haunted by a high and tender Presence. Since that day One has walked with us whom we knew not, prophecies have had new and deeper meanings, and the eventide has been full of serenity and light. Since then the heart of man has burned within him along the old

worn human way, touched with strange stirrings of beauty and of love. Here is a mighty mystical reality which no man may fathom, as incomprehensible as life itself, but which lends a glory to the world. Writing of "The Truth of Religion," Eucken speaks of it in the measured words of philosophy:

"The personality of Jesus was the turning point of religion. It was He who brought forth the Christian standard of living, which has made all previous standards totally inadequate. In Him we saw a human career of the most homely and simple kind, passed in a remote corner of the world, little heeded by his contemporaries, and, after a brief blossoming of life, cruelly put to death. Yet that life had an energy of spirit which filled it to the brim, it had a standard which has transformed human existence to its very root, it has made inadequate what hitherto seemed to bring entire happiness. It holds us fast and refuses to be weakened by us, even when all the dogmas of the church are seen to be of human origin."

Let us lay aside all dogmas and look at the fact which sets Jesus apart from every other teacher the world has known. If you would know the difference, take down the biography of any of the superlative leaders of the race and read it. Take the noble book of Plato in which he describes the farewell of Socrates to his friends. It is beautiful, tragic, pathetic, winsome. But not once does

Socrates suggest that when he has left his disciples he will remain with them, a personal attendant spirit. When we open the Gospel story we seem to be in another world. Jesus tells His followers that His body is withdrawn that He may be with them more intimately in spirit, not as a memory but as a living Presence. And that promise was fulfilled. Not only did He exalt and redeem men in the days of His flesh, but He continues to do so —

> "And by the vision splendid,
> We are on our way attended."

Death, so far from destroying Jesus, revealed His real nature and power. The pilgrim Peasant became, at its touch, the mystical and eternal Christ whose unfinished life slowly shapes the world. Here is the mighty reality with which we have to do, transforming human life and giving a new date to history— its depth no more wonderful than its many-sided manifestation. When we read the Epistle of James we see that reality in what Hume called "the dry light" of reason and practical common sense. James is the father of all such as worship the goddess of reason. For him, as for Emerson, Jesus is the way to God solely on account of the virility of His teaching. No doubt he would agree with our Yankee Plato that the church has erred in magnifying the Man until all others are dwarfed by His side, instead of

laying emphasis on His words and His beautiful, sweet character. At least, one would almost infer as much from reading his Epistle.

Turning to the Epistles of Paul we find another Christ. He practically ignores the life-history of Jesus as of little moment in comparison with the overwhelming fact of His expiatory death. Save "in the spirit," St. Paul did not know Jesus, having seen Him in a luminous vision at noonday. He tells us nothing of a miraculous birth, nothing of His miracles of mercy, and scarcely anything of His wonderful teaching. No, the Cross is central, creative, and prophetic in his thinking. That tragedy disclosed to him the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the mighty passion of God to reconcile the race to Himself. Again, if we open the Gospel of John we meet another Christ — the eternal Reason wearing the form of man, the creative Word made flesh. There is that Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, with which, if a man identify himself by humility and sacrifice, he rises into fellowship with God.

Each of these visions is true, but no one of them is the whole truth as it is in Jesus. Somehow one feels that the reality of Christ lies too deep to be fathomed by any one of these plummets, and where there are so many good things to choose between it is wisest to take all of them together. What was true in the apostolic church has been true all down the ages. No one teacher has fath-

omed the riches of truth in Christ, no one theology has exhausted it. If we read the "Didache," a manual issued about forty years after the death of St. Paul, we would hardly know that Jesus had ever been crucified. Even Marcion, albeit a great Paulinist, gave an entirely different interpretation of the death of Jesus. He held that the death of Jesus overthrew the reign of Jehovah and brought in the reign of mercy and forgiveness, and his followers were godly people distinguished by a purity of life almost ascetic.

St. Augustine was the Shakespeare of Christian theology, and he has left a record of his experience in his "Confessions"— one of the great classics of the world. There we follow him through a wayward, faultful youth, until his awakening, and then we witness his struggle to break the cords of sensuality that bound him. He was like the habit-stained, morally broken Nevarga in the Kingsley story, entitled "Yeast." Feeling utterly defiled, the poor man knelt in a desert of furze bush, and lifted his heart to God: "Then I spoke right out into the dumb, black air, and said, 'If Thou wilt be my God, good Lord who died for me, I will be Thine, dirty as I am, if Thou canst make anything of me.'" Naturally that deep and revealing experience colored all his thinking, and out of the depths he brought the most precious truth to light. Yet even that experience did not fathom the redeeming reality of Christ.

Clement of Alexandria knew not the wild passions which swept Augustine away into the mire. He was a scholar nurtured in Greek philosophy and literature, and a certain innate purity of nature kept him unpolluted by the evils of his age. He was a restless, wide-ranging thinker who craved for some solution of the dark problems which haunt the intellect, and, like Browning, he found the solution in Christ. If for Augustine Jesus was the Saviour and Cleanser of the soul, for Clement He was the Light and Teacher of truth. Passing to Francis of Assisi, with his life of beauty and pity, we meet another Christ. Meeting a leper by the wayside, he saw in that forlorn figure the image of Christ, and kissed Him. For Francis, the life of Jesus was a vision of the world as love and comradeship, of purity, pity, and gladness, and in that vision he went singing through his days — a figure to haunt and bless the world till time shall be no more.

To Nicholas Herman — known in religion as Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection — Christ appeared in another form. For thirty years he was a cook in a Carmelite kitchen, and a wiser, sweeter, whiter soul has seldom lived upon this earth. Women, take notice! Here was a man who did your work, and who, amid the din and heat and litter of his drudgery, won the high prize of sainthood. His whole life was "a practice of the Presence of Christ," and his purity of life and

charity of labor were the fruits of it. Happily he left us the story of his heart, and the path marked out by his soul into the Holy Place. To John Woolman the Quaker Jesus appeared in another form — as the infinite, ineffable Pity at the heart of this dark world, which alone is sufficient for the infinite pathos of human life. Upon his tender heart the weary weight of the misery of the world lay like a mountain of lead. Without Christ he would have been crushed; with Him he was victor.

For St. Phillips Brooks the life of Jesus was the sovereign beauty of the world. The spirit of his mind was the spirit of beauty; its depths were the depths of beauty. It was as a great artist that he thought of God, of Christ, and of the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus we might go from soul to soul along the Christian highway, and in each one find a new wonder, an unspeakable beauty — in each another Christ, yet always the same reality taking myriad forms. What is this Reality which men call Christ? There are those who talk of the Divinity of Christ, and others of His Deity, as if the two were somehow different. Let us, for once, have none of this quibbling about words, since all words are inadequate, if so that we may get to the heart of this matter. The truth with which we have to do is not a metaphysical proposition; it is a spiritual reality. Perhaps we can best make it clear by asking our hearts one question.

What is it that we worship? Is it mere Power? No! Power may awe us, crush us, command us, but never yet has it won the worship of the heart. Is it knowledge? No! An infinite Intellect may invite admiration, but we do not worship Wisdom. Is it Vastness? Not so! Read the Tennyson poems on " Vastness " and you will see how a cold, bare infinitude, so far from winning the love of man, strikes him dumb with terror. What, then, do we worship? Reverently let us say that, though God speak with the tongues of lightning, though He have all power so that He could remove mountains or hurl suns into space, yea, though He have all knowledge and understand all mysteries, and have not *Love,* we cannot worship Him. Only Love can win love, and if God be not Infinite Love we cannot love Him, albeit we may cower before Him, trembling and afraid. Love, only Love — Love, infinitely vast — that is what our own hearts tell us to seek till we find and trust unto the uttermost.

What, then, do we worship when in a mood dross-drained and exalting the heart has its way? Think it all through, up one side and down the other, and you will find that our ideal, our dream, our hope, that to which we pray, is no other than the Spirit that lived in Jesus, shone in His face, wrought in His works, and spoke in His words. If, when we look out upon the universe, now lucid and lovely, now dark and terrible, we can trust

the future, even as a little child, it is because we can trust that Spirit. The Spirit of Jesus in its strength, its gentleness, its august and awful humility, its incredible patience, its fathomless pity, its relentless love, its all-forgiving mercy, its victorious valor, its purity, its gladness — that is what is meant by the Deity of Jesus, not that He had unlimited knowledge, or power, but that the fullness of God, who is Love, dwelt in Him. Beyond that Love it is not possible for any man to imagine anything more Divine. The Spirit of Jesus is the ultimate Divine Reality so far as we can know it, or need to know it.

Where that Spirit of Love is, there God is. Because it lived in Jesus in its fullness, its richness, its unclouded beauty, He is the supreme revelation of what God is. This it was that redeemed Augustine from his sin, satisfied Clement in his perplexity, gave such unearthly luster to the life of Francis, and lifted the weight of woe from the soul of Woolman. Profound beyond thought, rich beyond measure, it takes myriad shapes, manifesting its infinite variety of beauty. St. Paul reached this Reality through his vision of vicarious suffering, St. John through his thought of the incarnation. One man is practical and builds his faith on the Sermon on the Mount; another is speculative, and comes to Christ through far-reaching ideas; while still another is mystical, and enters into the mystery by meditation and prayer.

Yet it is ever the same Reality, and it is fellowship with Him as He actually is that saves us, healing our wounds, cleansing our stains, and comforting our hearts.

As there have been many visions of the Reality we call Christ in the past, each age interpreting it in the light of its best and highest life, so there will be many others in days to come. It matters not that in our age the skies have been pushed back and the awful depths of the universe revealed — the Divine Reality abides. No doubt incalculable changes of thought await us, with many reconstructions of civilization, but, as Goethe said, we can never get beyond the Spirit of Jesus. Deeper truth it is not given us to see in the dim country of this world; higher Reality we do not need to know. If the social passion of our age gives us another Christ, it will be only one more aspect of the Eternal Christ who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

The same Yesterday — that is, through all the dark, mysterious past, the old backward and abysm of time, out of which the race has climbed. That is the key to the philosophy of evolution. The same To-day — despite the wide weltering chaos of a world-shaking war, with its blood and fire and tears. That is our only hope in these times that try the faith, aye, and the very souls of men — that slowly, tragically, yet surely, the Spirit of Jesus will soften the hearts of men and heal the

old hurt and heartache of humanity. The same Forever — in all the unfathomed deeps and destinies that lie before us, through unknown revolutions and overturnings, until whatever is to be the end of things. There is nothing in history, dark as much of it is, against the assurance that the Spirit of Jesus will yet triumph over all ignorance, injustice, and uncleanness.

"When the last day is ended,
And the nights are through;
When the sun lies buried
In its grave of blue;
When the stars are snuffed like candles,
And the seas no longer fret;
When the winds unlearn their cunning,
And the storms forget;
When the last lip is palsied,
And the last prayer said;
Love will reign immortal,
While the worlds lie dead."

XI

THE MASTER BOOK

"From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures."—2 *Tim.* 3:15.

TIME is a river and books are boats. Many volumes have started down the stream of years only to be wrecked and buried forever in its sands. Few indeed are the books that live out a single century. Here, as in all else, the law of the survival of the fittest applies, and there is no critic so terrible as Time. No book lives save as it tells of that in the life of man which grows not old and fades not away. Homer lives not simply for his art, but for his story of great adventure, his pictures of man and woman, of love and joy and death in the days when life was new. Vergil lives not only because he fashioned some of the noblest lines ever molded by mortal lips, but because he sings of the wayfaring of the soul in a far-off, unreturning past. Human things, not less than Divine things, never die.

Our Bible is not a Book, but a Divine Library, as St. Jerome called it so long ago. It is not the record of one mind or of one age, but of many

minds covering a long stretch of time — the history of the life of a people having a genius for religion as the Greeks had a genius for art and philosophy, and as the Romans had a genius for jurisprudence. Other nations had sacred books as a part of their literatures, but the literature of the Hebrews was wholly religious. The ruling trait of that race was its sense of the Unseen, its vision of the moral law, its passion for God. Here was a folk whose government was a theocracy, and whose patriotism was piety. Their poetry kindled its flame at the altar of faith. Their architecture was a House of Prayer. The Muse of their History was the Spirit of Holiness. Surely it is not a thing strange that the poets of such a people became prophets, their faces aglow with moral idealism, their lips speaking words of fire. Nor is it a matter of wonder that the most religious race in all history should have written the sacred book of mankind, the moral classic of the world.

One may say, reverently, that the life of Jesus, so far as we can understand it, was the consummate flower of the piteous, passionate, aspiring life of that mighty race — just as Plato was the crowning glory of a race of thinkers. On His human side Jesus was surely the focus, the glow-point, at which the God-inspired soul of His people, melted by sorrow and purified by fire, became incandescent with heavenly light. It was as if the

scattered atoms of an old chaos had at last been gathered into a planet — yea, a Sun to light our dark world; as if the wandering tones of many harps had found a home in the bosom of one sovereign Harmony. This does not account for Christ, but it does help us to mark the path by which He came and the tradition in which He stood. It is only to say that God appeared to a race that had eyes to see, and spoke to men who had ears to hear.

The land of the Bible is an enduring commentary on a Book which has in it the rugged grandeur of a work of nature. It is a tiny land, shut in on two sides by deserts, and on the other sides by mountain and sea; a rough and broken land where shaggy, thunder-split hills enclose narrow valleys, and beauty sits on the brow of barrenness; of mutable climate and varying moods; lorded over by blazing suns and deep lucid nights; a land ever in extremes — now dried up as in a furnace, now flooded with loud waters. An isolated land, with the Dead Sea at the south and snowy mountains at the north, yet it was a highway of trade and the battlefield of rival empires, its history a long-drawn tragedy of war and pillage and sorrow. The Bible is a mirror of its motherland, alike of its history and its scenery, where suns rise in beauty and set in splendor, and rivers flow, and flowers bloom, and lightnings rush like angry painters across the sky. As Emerson said:

"Out from the heart of nature rolled
The burdens of the Bible old;
The litanies of nations came,
Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
Up from the burning core below —
The canticles of love and woe."

Open the Bible where you will, and the first impression is that of vastness. It has in it the curve of the earth and the arch of the sky. Great and wide like the world, it is rooted in the abyss of creation and rises into the blue mysteries of heaven. There are continents of truth, seas of mystery, rivers flowing from invisible springs, valleys rich with harvest, marshes of melancholy, depths sombre and sunless, and mountains that pierce the clouds. It is a world of reality and fact, a world in which men live and love, and sin and suffer, and hope and die, in the sight of the sun. It is the world as God made it, and is making it, with Divine power in His forces, Divine order in its ongoings, and Divine purpose in its end. This book has four characters in it, God and Man, the sky and the dirt. It has in it the strength and massive grandeur of elemental things, and no one can read it aright without feeling that he is in the presence of the big, eternal meanings of life.

The Bible is not a book of philosophy. It does not argue. It is a Book of Vision whose story moves between two mighty seers — Moses, whose vision brooded over the dark chaos of old, whence

order and beauty emerged, and St. John, whose insight forecast in solemn apocalypse the final issue of man and the world. What a history it recites! It begins at the beginning, with the wandering shepherds and wayfarers in the dim morning of time. We see the rise of the home and the family, of the tribe and the nation; a race passing through slavery into the vestibule of civilized life; the gradual building of a rich and complex social order; its prosperity, its splendor, its testing time, and its final fall, "because it knew not the time of its visitation." The story begins in a Garden and ends in the coming of the City of God, where there is no sadness nor weeping, and the whole is set against a majestic background of eternity — birth and death, promise and fulfilment, victory and defeat, all the drama of humanity in the presence of God.

As one reads there comes a shock of surprise that the essentials of human nature, its joys and woes and upward-leaping hopes, remain seemingly unaltered by all the vicissitudes of time and change. Across the rise and fall of nations, over the feverish life of groping generations long since vanished, there sounds the unchanging music of faith and hope, of love and loss and longing. In a remote story of a Moabite girl — a page let fall from an old picture of life, as if by accident — men and women find to-day the one perfect expression of undying affection: "Where thou goest I will go;

and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, thy God my God. Where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me and more also, if aught but death part me from thee." In a record of fierce tribal war, amidst scenes of cunning and barbaric vengeance, we hear the most musical of all laments of friendship — the living for the dead: "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been to me; thy love for me was wonderful, passing the love of woman." An undated drama of the desert, full of its wide spaces and awful questionings — a book mysterious and magnificent which has drawn the deepest minds to its study — gives voice to a plaintive cry which not time nor fortune has modified: "As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up; so man lieth down and riseth not; till the heavens be no more; they shall not wake, nor be raised out of their sleep."

Here, in this splendid spacious Book, one finds every variety of thought and mood and feeling, from a biting skepticism to a death-defying faith, from a sob of despair to a shout of ecstasy. It contains passages of the boldest denial — impeachments of the beneficence of God more fierce than any in the choruses of Swinburne — and an agnosticism more ultimate than even that of Omar the Tentmaker, without his scent and sheen of the flesh. A bit of sensuous love poetry is set side

by side with the most bitter and shattering pessimism, crying like the wail of chill winds in a deserted city. Here are prayers that have wings, and songs of the victory of faith over death and time; confessions that lay bare the soul of man; pilgrim hymns; elegies portraying the majesty of God and the fleetingness of man; prophecies that flash the future in their mirrors. On the music marches until, at last, there breaks into it the sweetest voice that man has ever heard, whose words are the truth about life, and whose tones evoke melodies that echo forever.

At sundry times and in divers manners this music is heard, like a great organ with myriad keys on which a Master plays. In the Bible there is almost every form of literary art — history, poetry, drama, fiction, biography, letters, lyrics, elegies, epics, epigrams, proverbs, parables, allegories, and the dreams of apocalyptic seers. John was a mystic, Ezekiel a divine dreamer, David a lyric poet, and Solomon a kind of Biblical Benjamin Franklin. Each has his own imagery and thought, his own tone and style, but the whole is united by one spirit, one passion, one hunger for eternity. As men come to know the laws of great literature, how it grows and how it is interpreted, the variety and sublimity of the Bible will be unveiled. They will hush their debates and listen to its far-sounding, Divine cadences, many-toned and melting, knowing that a Book which grew out

of a profound morality and a lofty spiritual life, if rightly used and obeyed, will produce in us, infallibly, the kind of life which produced it. They will know that it is inspired because it inspires them, revealing heights and depths unguessed before — heights where the Infinite woos the finite into its mystery, and the depths where men find the heart of the world. It was not a Christian scholar, but a skeptic famous for his stinging wit — Heine, whose poetry is a blended smile, tear and sneer — who wrote these words:

"What a Book! Stranger still than its contents is for me its style, in which every word is, so to speak, a product of nature, like a tree, a flower, like the sea, the stars, like man himself. One does not know how, one does not know why, one finds it altogether quite natural. In Homer, the other great book, the style is a product of art, and the material always, as in the Bible, is taken from reality, yet it shapes itself into a poetic form as though recast in the melting pot of the human spirit. In the Bible there is not the least trace of art; it is the style of a memorandum book in which the Absolute Spirit entered the daily incident with the same actual truthfulness with which we write our washing list."

Some have denied that the Bible is an unveiling of the Divine nature, but no one doubts that it is a revelation of human nature. Here is a book that knows man, the road whence he came and

what is in his heart. It finds us, as Coleridge said, strips us to the soul, and makes us see as in a mirror what manner of men we really are. No other book is so candid with us, so honest, so stern, so tender, so mercilessly merciful in its searchings of the strange soul within us. No man can stand before it and have any vanity left in him. It knows our innermost, secret sin — the lust that defiles, the passion that sears, the envy that gnaws, the pride that is foolishness. Righteousness is its one great word — righteousness in God demanding righteousness in man. It teaches, as does all great tragedy from Euripides to Shakespeare, the iron law of destiny — the sowing and reaping of sin. But in the Bible this law is suffused with a vast tenderness, as if to show that it is a law of love. The moral earnestness of this Book makes one tremble, as its ineffable pity makes one weep. No other book has in it such a blend of charity and rebuke. The mercy of God is in it, and He remembers that we are dust — hence its voice of many thunders and its whisper as of a mother over her child.

In other books we see humanity struggling upward, building a Tower of Babel; in the Bible we feel that something comes down to man, as at Pentecost. It moves under a whispering sky. All who read it know that our human life is from above downward, and that our help is from God. Other books have rafters and a roof. The Bible

has none. In Shakespeare the unseen world appears in weird ghosts or flitting witches, as a thing uncanny and dreadful. Not so in the Bible. The subtle air of eternity blows through it, like the sweet winds that wander over the meadows. It talks of the eternal world with a simple artless faith, as a child talks of the stars, as if heaven were as real as is earth, and as natural. It makes us know that God is here, that eternity is now, that life has ageless fellowships — that every truth is full of Divine mystery, and every day charged with unknown, immortal meanings.

Hence there is a power in this master Book not found in any other — a power of faith, a sense of unseen reality, which makes men broad of mind and tall of soul. Look into the life of Gladstone, with his fine moral idealism, or into the life of Lincoln, with his cool sanity and his stern but delicate justice, and you will learn that they drew much of their strength from the Bible. It is no wonder that the prophetic eloquence of Lincoln echoes with Bible music, as do so many great passages of our literature — like that noble page in the "School of Saints," like that forest scene in "Westward Ho!" like that unforgettable refrain in Thackeray when Henry Esmond returns from the wars. Oh, let us take this wise old Book to our hearts, and not only love it but live with it, making it the prophet of our inner life, lest the faith that makes us men be crushed by the tramp of

heavy years. If we use it wisely, we may commune with those in whom God dwelt, even as He dwells in us, albeit we do not yet know Him whom to know aright is life eternal.

All men feel, at times, an oppressive sense of human insignificance. Millions of men lived here upon this earth before us, and have vanished. We do not know their names. Like us, they were pilgrims and had to pass on. Soon we must follow along the same beaten path into the common oblivion, and our footsteps will be trodden out by the oncoming multitude. It is in the midst of meditations such as these that the dear old Bible brings us its sweetest message. It fills us with a sense of the dignity of the human personality, its sacredness, and its august destiny. It tells us that our little lives, brief, broken and frail as they are, have a meaning for God; that death is not the end of all, but that beyond its shadow there hovers and waits a larger life. It makes life worth while and opens gates of wonder. God be thanked for a Book which knows so much of the weakness of man, his wickedness and his waywardness, and yet holds up so high an ideal and so grand a hope.

But there is something else in the Bible — a quality so delicate, so elusive, and yet so strong, which no words may ever hope to capture or define. We call it spirituality, a hallowing spirit, an indwelling presence, which gives to this book a nameless and ineffable power and charm. We

know what it is; we feel it; it rises from the page like a perfume — but no one can put it into words. Religion is a Divine life, not a Divine science, and life cannot be turned into a book. The worth of the Bible is the witness it bears to the reality of God, its testimony that He is found of those who seek Him, and that he lives in the souls of men. As such it is a symbol of a Book greater than itself — the volume of the Faith of Man, the Book of the Will of God as humanity has learned it in the midst of the years — which Lowell had in mind when he wrote:

"Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,
And not on paper leaves nor leaves of stone;
Each age, each kindred, adds a verse to it,
Texts of despair or hope, of joy or moan.
While swings the sea, while mists the mountains shroud,
While thunder's surges burst on cliffs of cloud,
Still at the prophet's feet the nations sit."

Books are transient and will pass away. Homer, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, and the Bible itself, are all doomed. When time is done they are done. But the life of God in the soul of man can never die. It will live when the globe itself, and all which it inherits, shall dissolve like a dream and leave not a rack behind. Of that eternal life the Bible bears witness in words the simplest, the deepest, the sanest, the truest and the sweetest that man has heard in his long journey, and it is therefore that we love it.

XII

THE SUPREMACY OF THE BIBLE

I

MY subject takes it to be a fact that the Bible is the one supreme book of the world. And so it is. Argument is unnecessary; the fact proves it. No one denies it who has any regard at all either for the witness of history or for the realities of life. As Seeley said, the greatest work of individual literary genius shows by the side of the Bible like some building of human hands beside the peak of Teneriffe. With this let us join the words of Scherer, written out of the depths of his skepticism, "If there is anything certain in the world it is that the destiny of the Bible is linked with the destiny of holiness on earth." Not only was the Bible the loom on which our own language was woven, but it has a place equally in the history and the heart of mankind which no other book may ever hope to have.

Even those who have assailed the Bible have seldom, if ever, assailed the book itself, but nearly always some dogma about the Bible. By the same token, those who defend the Bible more often de-

fend some theory about it, forgetting that the fate of the Bible is not bound up with the fortunes of any dogma as to its origin, infallibility, or authority. There is no need that anyone defend the Bible. It is the Bible that defends us from the besieging vanities of life, from the rude cynicism of the world, from the lusts of flesh and the fear of the grave. What men need to do is to be still and listen to its great and simple words, telling the story of God and the Soul and their eternal life together; and whoso does that will know what poor Heine meant when he wrote these words from what he called his mattress grave:

"I attribute my enlightenment entirely and simply to the reading of a book. Of a book! Yes, and it is an old honest book, modest as nature, modest as the sun which warms us, as the bread which nourishes us, a book as full of love and blessing as the old mother who reads it with her dear, trembling lips; and this book is the Bible. With right it is named the Holy Scriptures. He who has lost his God can find Him again in this book; and he who has never known Him is here struck by the breath of the Divine Word."

Because this is so, because the Bible is so much wiser than its defenders, what is here said of its unique supremacy is by way of illustration, not in proof of my thesis. If we contrast the Bible with other venerated writings, we find that it stands alone and apart, very unlike the Upanishads, the

Zend-Avesta and the Koran, not only because it is so much more practical, so much less speculative, so rich and varied in its music; but because it shows us, more clearly than any other, the growth of man in his knowledge of God, of himself, of good and evil, of law and love and truth. In fact, it is a Book of Life, not a mere record of intellectual speculation about life, and as a man reads it he sees, as in a mirror, the history of his own soul. Moreover, it comes to us from a time when man saw the big meanings of life with a freshness of insight, a directness unobscured by passage through media that blur and confuse, without learned subtleties and those ingenious concealments which rob us of reality. Written before life was "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," it has a vividness, a vitality, a sanity, an artless simplicity, and a lucidity as of the morning light, not to be found anywhere else.

Thirty years ago a great savant characterized the Bible as a collection of the rude imaginings of Syria, the worn-out bottle of Judaism into which the generous new wine of science was being poured. No doubt he was angry when he said so, else he would not have said a thing so foolish. Whereupon the noblest literary critic of our day stated once for all the reason why, from the point of view of literature alone, the Bible lives and will live when we and all those now upon the earth have fallen into dust. He said:

"The new wine of science is a generous vintage, undoubtedly, and deserves all the respect it gets from us; so do those who make it and serve it out; they have so much intelligence; they are so honest and fearless. But whatever may become of their new wine in a few years when the wine-dealers shall have passed away, when the savant is forgotten as any star-gazer of Chaldea — the 'old bottle' is going to be older yet — the Bible is going to be eternal. For that which decides the vitality of any book is precisely that which decides the value of any human soul — not the knowledge it contains, but simply the attitude it assumes toward the universe, unseen as well as seen. The attitude of the Bible is just that which every soul must, in its highest and truest moods, always assume — that of a wise wonder in front of such a universe as this — that of a noble humility before a God such as 'He in whose hand we stand.' That is why — like that precious Cup of Jemshid, imagined by the Persians — the Bible reflects to-day and will reflect forever, every wave of human emotion, every passing event of human life — reflects them as faithfully as it did to the great and simple people in whose great and simple tongue it was written. Coming from the heart of man it goes straight to the heart. This is the kind of literature that never does die; a fact which the world has discovered long ago."

Here the point is that, as a record of human life

in the gray years of old, and apart from its divine revelation, the Bible belongs to the things immortal, and will live while human nature is the same. Consider for a moment this fact, established as it is by the terrible testing of time, and you will see why all attacks on the Bible fail, and why any defense of it is unnecessary. Our great critic — it is Watts-Dunton, if you would know his name — proceeds to discuss the style of the Bible, which he calls the " great style," more easily recognized than defined, but which he ventures to define as unconscious power blended with unconscious grace. This style, so august in its simplicity and truthfulness, allows a writer to touch upon any subject with no risk of defilement, because it tells the thing as it is with a clarity which leaves no suggestion of evil. Also, whensoever this style is attained, it moves with the rhythm of life itself, lifting us into a realm where a thousand years are as a day, and where a whisper echoes forever. That is why the heart-cry of an exile in old Babylon, or an echo of an hour of prayer in the hills of Judea, lives and speaks to the heart of man to-day, as if time were a fiction. As we may read:

" Now the great features of Bible rhythm are a recognized music apart from a recognized law — ' artifice ' so completely abandoned that we forget we are in the realm of art — pauses so divinely set that they seem to be ' wood-notes wild '— though all the while they are, and must be, governed by a

mysterious law too subtly sweet to be formulated; and all kinds of beauties infinitely beyond the triumphs of the metricist, but beauties that are unexpected. There is a metre, to be sure, but it is that of the 'moving music which is life;' it is the living metre of the surging sea within the soul of him who speaks. And if this is so in other parts of the Bible, what is it in the Psalms, where the flaming steeds of song, though really kept strongly in hand, seem to run reinless as the wild horses of the wind!"

II

Let me illustrate a little, if only to show how high the simplest words of the Bible tower above the loftiest peaks of poetry, as the Alps out-top the masonry of man. Take the eulogy of man which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Hamlet, and which has been called the point where the master poet raised prose to the sublimest pitch of verse. The words are familiar:

"That goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors. What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty; in form and moving how express and admirable; in action how like an angel; in apprehension

how like a god; the beauty of the world; the paragon of animals."

There is the rich and fluent style of the spacious days of Elizabeth — ornate, apostrophic, brilliant. Here is wonder indeed, albeit not that "wise wonder" in front of a universe now luminous and lovely, now dark and terrible, of which our critic speaks. Nor do we find here that noble humility before Him in whose great hand we stand. How much deeper and truer, how much more faithful to reality are these lines from the eighth Psalm on exactly the same theme; how noble they are in their stripped simplicity, how chaste and moving their music, touched with that haunting pathos which one hears in all Bible melody:

"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou hast made him but a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas."

Surely it is something more than old association which makes the sundering difference between these two passages. How tawdry and high-flown

the one seems alongside the grave and simple truthfulness of the other; how world-far they are apart in their attitude toward the life of man and his place in the order of the world. Both celebrate the dignity of man, but in what different ways, against what different backgrounds; one under a roof fretted with golden fire, the other under a sky that has no roof nor rafter; one as if man were a kind of god exiled on a sterile promontory, the other full of wonder that God is even mindful of a being so fragile and fleeting. The difference is fundamental, and it justifies the saying of Newman that in the Bible, and most of all in the Gospels, there is a manifestation of the divine so special as to make it appear, from the contrast, as if nothing were known of God where the Bible is unknown. Of course this is not true, for God has not left Himself without witnesses in any land or age; but if anyone would feel the full force of the fact, let him take any book known to man, even the greatest, and read it alongside the Bible.

Of the influence of the Bible on civilization much has been written, but the story has never and can never be told. Even as far back as the days of Chrysostom, the Bible could be read in languages Syrian, Indian, Persian, Armenian, Scythian and Samaritan. Now it can be read in almost every tongue under heaven, and the fact that it is the one book that can be universally translated is a touching proof that God is not far from any

tribe, and that in the lowest human being His image shines. Poor raiment for His word many of these dialects are, but somehow that mighty book can clothe itself in each. One version, however, and that infinitely slower and more difficult to make, remains to be achieved, and that is the translation of the Bible into the life of humanity. When that translation is finished, as it will be at last, there will be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness and the peace of God.

III

And this brings us to the central and grand fact about the Bible, by which it is set apart from all other books whatsoever, and which invests it with an ineffable power and beauty: it is the Book of the Presence of God. Wherever the Bible goes it brings a sense of the presence of God. Its first truth is God, its last truth is God, the basis of its uprising passion and prophecy, the keynote of its far-sounding melody, is the reality of God, whose presence is the splendor of the world, and whose awful will the sun and stars obey. When He is known to be near, all things are transfigured; when He is felt to be far away, its music becomes a cry in the night. It does not argue about God; it reveals Him, and the romance of its story is the unfolding of His life in the tangled and turbulent life of man. Hence the progress of faith portrayed in the Bible; but in the struggle and conflict of all

those groping generations the living God abides, and man walks in the midst of revelations.

If we inquire in what way God makes Himself known to man in the Bible, we ask the profoundest question in the entire range of religious interests: Does the eternal God speak to man? If so, how? No one may answer such questions, except to say that truth may be regarded either as the gift of God or as the achievement of man, because it is both. Every truth is, from the divine side, revelation, and from the human, discovery. Jacob wrestling with the angel in the dawn is the eternal parable of revelation. For, if truth is a gift it is also a trophy, since even the divine reason is unable to disclose His truth to man until, by virtue of his growth of soul, man is ready and worthy and willing to receive it. Thus, every truth that God gives man wins, and every truth that man wins from the mystery of life God bestows. Since God and man are interwoven in the finding of truth, collaborators, so to speak, in the process of revelation, how can man know when the thought of God is made known to him? Here is the crux of the whole matter, and we need not hesitate to face it frankly and reverently.

There are two ways by which we may know where human thought ends and the divine thought is revealed: by insight and by experience. And the Bible shows itself to be unique and supreme by

both tests. For example, take any great book and one can tell instantly, not only by the sweep and rhythm and majesty of certain pages where the thought of the writer passes beyond itself, but also by the response which it evokes in depths of his own soul. For the thoughts of man at their highest and purest carry in them, as the clouds carry the sunlight, the thoughts of the eternal. Further than this we cannot go, unless it be in that amazing sentence in the "Morals on the Book of Job," by St. Gregory, where, in speaking of the manner in which God makes Himself known to the angels, he writes:

"For because no corporeal obstacle is in the way of a spiritual being, God speaks to His holy angels in the very act of His revealing to their hearts His inscrutable secrets, that whatsoever they ought to do they may read it in the simple contemplation of truth, and that the very delights of contemplation should be like a vocal precept, for that is as it were spoken to them as hearers which is inspired in them as beholders."

Beyond these words no one may venture into the ineffable mystery of the revelation of God to men or angels; and that is why the Bible, albeit a book of the people which were of old, is eternal, fresh as the morning light, exempt from the touch of time because it is timeless. Often it resembles the natural world in its elevation and depressions, but

in its great hours it speaks for eternity in words childlike in simplicity, awful in their clarity, and we know, by the mighty answer of our own hearts, that we are listening to the truth about life and death. Whether it be the story of the wayfarer dreaming on a stony bed, the commands of a moral lawgiver in the wilderness, the sob of a Psalmist in his sin, the prophetic vision of Isaiah, or the words of Him who spake as never man spake, when we read it we cry out, as Kepler did when he looked through his glass into the sky, "O Lord, I think Thy thoughts after Thee."

Moreover, by the testimony of ages of human living, the moral teachings of the Bible, and its laws of the life of the spirit, have shown themselves to be among the things that cannot be shaken. Nations disregard them, and fall into ruin. Men defy them, and die in the dust. Even to-day, in these new and changed times, the pages of the Hebrew prophets might be wet with fresh tears because of the sorrows of the broken and fallen in our midst. The experience of humanity in its moral victory and defeat becomes, in this way, a witness to the supremacy of the Bible, confirming alike its spiritual vision and its system of moral values. It is therefore that the Bible lives, not by fiat, but because it is the Book of Eternal Life in the midst of time, and of its influence and power there will be no end.

IV

Between the Old and New Testament there is a gulf, not only as to time, but as to the manner in which God is revealed, as if the river of life, having run under ground for a space, had burst forth into a fountain of light and healing. If in the Old Testament we are shown the contrast between God and man — His greatness and our littleness, His eternity and our pathetic mortality — the New Testament reveals the kinship of God and man. Communion with God in the New Testament is not, as in the Old, a dialogue of one person with another, but the infusion of a new life by an indwelling spirit. As Luther said long ago, the supreme office of the Bible is to show us Christ, and in Him is all that we need to know even if we never see any other book.

Again, to state the fact is to prove it. Surely the life of Christ, as incomparable in its art as it is ineffable in its revelation of what lies at the heart of this dark world, sets the Bible apart as forever supreme and unapproachable. So much is this so, indeed, that it seems as needless to discuss the uniqueness of the Bible as to defend it from assault. If one will not hear that Biography of Love, that Memoir of Pity, that historic record of Redeeming Grace, neither will he believe though one arise from the dead. There is disclosed the heart of the eternal, the crowning glory

of the Bible, and the sovereign beauty of the world; at once a revelation and a redemption. As St. Jerome put it in the preface to his Commentary on Isaiah: "If, according to St. Paul, Christ is 'the power of God and the wisdom of God,' one who knows not the Scriptures knows not that power and wisdom; for ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." If the spirit of Jesus is more diffused now than when Jerome wrote, it is still true that our life and literature, so far as they are imbued with His truth, reflect the light of the Gospels.

Add now the twenty centuries of high, heroic Christian experience, so rich, so radiant, so profound, deriving, as it so gratefully confesses, from the story of the life of Christ in the Bible, and the testimony is transcendent! Here the facts are overwhelming, so that he who runs may read, showing that wherever the Bible goes there go light and hope, and noble human living — tenderness in the family, righteousness in the state, and honor among men. What the Bible has meant to our poor humanity, and will yet mean to unknown ages hidden in the womb of time, by virtue of its power to cleanse the sinful, heal the broken of heart, and lift into faith and love those attacked by despair, wasted by weariness, or worn with grief, no mortal pen can recite. Take a single page from the story of the Bible in New Guinea, typical of ten thousand volumes of Christian history, and it tells

us facts more to be prized than the discovery of a new star in the sky:

"I have myself seen murderers and cannibals live peaceful lives. I have seen shameless thieves and robbers become honest; I have seen the lascivious and filthy become pure; I have seen the quarrelsome and selfish become kind and gentle. But I have never heard of such changes arising from any other agency than that of the Word whose entrance bringeth life, and whose acceptance is the power of God unto salvation."

Now and again a great heroic soul, or some humble, obscure saint, shows us what life is when the Bible is translated into character — how it makes God real and near, investing these fleeting days with enduring significance and sanctity; how it strengthens what is weak, softens what is hard, and touches the whole nature to beauty and fineness; how it fortifies the soul against those blind fears which no one can name but which make a secret terror in the way; how it heals those profound sorrows of which we hardly dare to speak, not by mere lapse of time nor the induration of the heart, but by transfiguring the old tenderness into a new solace; and how, at last, it flings an arch of promise across the all-devouring grave, linking our mortal life with a life that shall endless be.

I have not finished, but I must stop. It is of no use to go on. I feel that what hovers before me, although it is so vivid, is not to be told save by

the Bible itself, which, as I said at the outset, needs no one to speak for it. Nay, it is the Bible that speaks in my behalf, and as I listen debate ceases, difficulties are forgotten, anxiety disappears, and I am as a child in the arms of One who knows what I am, whence I came, why I am here, and whither I go, and who smiles at my terrors.

XIII

ALL SOULS AND ALL SAINTS

"Behold, all souls are mine."—*Ezek.* 18:4.
"This honor have all the saints."—*Psa.* 149:9.

THE two festivals joined in our theme, as they are united in time, are like two stanzas in the poetry of the Christian year. It is fitting that they be celebrated in the autumn time, with its ripeness, its richness, and its mellow, haunting loveliness, when the harvest brings the treasures of the seasons. How in accord with the pieties of the heart to recall those who walked here before us in other autumns, and who found their home, as we must find ours, in Him who abides from one generation to another. If we are fleeting, He is eternal, and our hope in life, in death, and in all that lies beyond is in Him who is over all and whose mercy never faileth.

The words of the first text, taken from one of the greatest chapters of the Bible, need no one to prove that they were divinely spoken. When we hear them we know that prophet was right when he said, "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Behold, all souls are mine." The words

are worthy of the speech of God. Human thought at its highest and purest carries in it, as the clouds carry the sunlight, the thoughts of the Eternal. By the majesty and rhythm of such words, as well as by the spontaneous answer of our hearts, we know that the thought of the writer passed beyond itself. They have in them the echo of the infinite, in their sweep and grasp and grandeur.

> "For the love of God is broader
> Than the measure of man's mind!
> And the heart of the Eternal
> Is most wonderfully kind."

Seventy years ago it would have been deemed a blasphemy to say that God is under obligations to man. In those days men seemed to think that the chief attribute of God is an arbitrary and irresponsible almightiness, as if, having brought man into being, He was in no way responsible to him or for him. One sometimes wonders how men could worship such a God at all. Should a man declare himself exempt from obligation to his family, he would be despised by all just and honorable men. Yes, God is under obligation to man, under the obligations of His perfection. Having made man in own image, He owes him life, love, forgiveness, compassion, sympathy, and eternal regard. This would seem to be self-evident, if we think a moment. The source of morality must be moral. The source of knowledge must be rational. The source of that stream of love which

waters our mortal life, must be an infinite Love. Since human souls belong to God, so long as He is God they can never be absent from His thought and love.

I

Now consider some of the deep meanings of this day of all souls. No truth, no fact, can have a larger claim on the thought of men than the truth that all souls belong to God. It is fundamental in theology. It lies at the basis of all religious philosophy, and is the enduring foundation of all fruitful thinking about the problems of humanity. It implies, first of all, a common origin of all men, one source of life for all souls. Whatever theory men may hold as to the physical origins of humanity, this text tells us the truth we most need to know about the real origin of man. Admit that mankind evolved slowly from lowly beginnings, it is none the less true that all souls come from God and exist in Him. He is spirit; they are spirit. God is father; the soul is child, and this ineffable kinship of God and man is the master light of all our seeing, as it is the ground of all our hope. Human intelligence, human will, human love, must have their source in an infinite Mind, a perfect Will, an eternal Love; and because all souls have a common and divine heredity, we are brothers to the last man of us, forever.

Also, a common origin implies a common dis-

cipline and development, not only common faculties, but a common basis of culture. All great thinkers unite in saying that our life on earth has meaning only when we see it is a great school and a great schooling, and so they have taught. Our age boasts of its achievements, but in regard to the vital things that matter most the man of to-day stands side by side with his foresires. Outwardly the world has undergone immense and bewildering transformation, but in its essential conditions life remains what it has always been. Sunshine is the same, and starlight, and the course of the seasons, and the blood in the veins of men. The great river channels hardly change with the centuries; and those other streams, the life-currents which ebb and flow in human hearts, pulsate to the same great needs, the same great loves and terrors. Hunger and labor go on as of old, and seedtime and harvest, and marriage and birth and death.

No doubt this is one reason why the oldest and simplest occupations of man come home to all of us so closely, and touch us so deeply. Any trade that lies close to nature, like that of the hunter, the herdsman, the husbandman, the builder, has power to thrill our pulses with ancestral instincts and memories, and touch us to poetry. As Stevenson said, these ancient things — the tilling of the soil, the tending of a flock, the building of a house — have upon them the dew of the morning

of humanity. For the same reason, a road across a desert, a sheltering roof against a storm, or a hearth-fire glowing in the darkness, can stir the human heart as symbols of human fellowship in common necessity. Just so, our great books are classics because they tell of these elemental things which are like the sky and the wind, like bread and milk, like the kisses of little children and the tears we shed beside the grave. When a poet sings of these old human realities, his song never grows obsolete or out of date, because they are a part of the common heritage of mankind.

Here lies the meaning of that profound saying of à Kempis: "He who seeks his own loses the things that are common." All alike have the voiceless magnificence of earth and sky, the ministry of social condition, and the harsh attrition of the years amidst which we walk and work. To all souls come the deep experiences of sorrow, the hard lot of disappointment, and the sad suggestion and the sadder defilement of wrong. The temptations that tug at us are such as men have felt since the far time when the Vedic poets sang in India, and the woes we endure are gray with age. They all mean a common discipline, a lesson in that inevitable Divine education of humanity which is made necessary by our kinship with God and our candidacy for righteousness and the growing vision of truth. Thus, by the ordinance of God, we must face the facts of life, in the lowest place

of toil and care, as well as along the path of joy, if happily we may learn the deep and tender wisdom of the old Quaker in the Whittier poem:

> "Scarcely have I asked in prayer
> That which others might not share."

Fellows, as we are, in the discipline of a Great School, it is yet true that each must do his task and learn his lesson as if he were alone with God. No truth is more in need of emphasis to-day when a high-sounding New Morality, as it is called, is striking at the roots of individual moral responsibility. Hugo wrote his "Les Miserables" to show the often cruel injustice of our social system, as he wrote "Notre Dame" to reveal the tyranny and terror of superstition. But he leaves us with the impression that society, not the individual, is the real criminal. Ardent and sympathetic souls, taking this half-truth and forgetting the other half, use it, albeit with the best intention, in a way to weaken the moral life. Against such teaching the mighty document from which my first text is taken is a thunderous rebuke, showing that it is neither new nor moral. It would be a philanthropy to put that chapter from Ezekiel in the hand of every youth in our land, if only to reinforce the awful voice of his own soul telling him that he, not his father, nor society, is the master of his life.

There rises an inevitable logic, deriving from the fact of a common origin and a common dis-

cipline of all souls, by which we are led to the great hope of a final common destiny. If all souls belong to God, and if God is as wise as He is great, as loving as He is powerful, there seems no way to escape it. Unless, indeed, we say that evil is mightier than good, and that the will of man can defeat the Love that will not let us go. Some are much concerned with destination, but we need to emphasize, also, and more vitally, the larger fact of destiny, which is moral and spiritual. For the primary thing is not where we go, but what we become in the agony and bloody sweat of the moral process. Whether few or many are to be saved need not be a dogma, but surely it is in accord with the inevitable sequence of the Divine origin of all souls to regard retribution, so certain here and hereafter, as a part of the common discipline of redemption. Let us rejoice in the awful, leveling love of God, wherein there is no difference between the first and the last, and rest our hope in Him in whose great hand we stand.

II

How fitting, in a world made so sad by moral defeat, to have a day set apart in honor of those who won victory over life and time and death. In the calendar of the church every day in the year is dedicated to one of the great saints, in whom holiness was touched by the light and fire of genius. But the day of All Saints was instituted

in honor of obscure, heroic souls who, hearing a voice untranslatable, sweeter than music and vague as a dream, dared to follow it and find the great secret. Truly did George Eliot say, because things are as well with us as they are is largely due to the unknown nobility of unhistoric lives that sleep in unmarked graves. They were men and women like ourselves who, by the sweet grace of God, won mastery of moods, conquest of passion, and toiled in the name of Eternity in the fields of Time. They were patriots in the Republic of God, and the thought of them brings a nameless cheer to all who struggle and aspire for a better life.

Surely here, as in so many ways, we of the freer fellowship have much to learn from the older church, for the capacity for hero worship is one of the great forces of our being, and is unsurpassed in evoking the highest in man. What Washington and Lincoln are to this nation, with its ideals and hopes, wise men know; what the prophets, apostles, martyrs, saints, and heroic servants of our kind, might mean for the renewal in each new age of the Christian ideal and obligation, no one can estimate. In this behalf, we must enlarge the calendar so as to include any one, of any faith or any race, who by a like precious grace attained to the victory most worth winning; names as far apart as Luther and Lincoln, Eckhart and Emerson, Wesley and Woolman. That is to say,

as all souls are included in the processes of history, and in the progressive unfolding of humanity, we would set up for our homage all who in the thickest of sharpest test have been triumphant, and who are concrete examples of the highest moral and spiritual life.

The highest Gospel was a Biography, said Carlyle, and that gospel stirs men like mighty music just because it is not set forth in a proposition, but incarnated in a Personality. Had it been made known as a body of ethical and religious truth, an order of spiritual facts, it would not have swayed men as it did, redeeming the world from the rot of paganism. No, the Word became flesh, walked with men wearing the hues of human life, revealing a new type of moral manhood achieved by the Divine method of discipline for character. Of that living word of eternal life the saints are the best translators and interpreters, not because they thought more deeply, but because they lived more heroically. They did not know they were heroes; they did not profess to be saints. They were not free from fault. But forgetting all else, they followed in His way with a passionate and persistent fidelity, serving Him in the needs of those whom He loved, and so came to the Place of Vision, even to the City of God whose gates stand open day and night.

> "Brothers, we are treading
> Where the saints have trod."

Lives of the Saints! How wonderful it is to have each day of our troubled life — often only a muddled memory of what it ought to be — linked with the name of one who, amid difficulties like our own, and greater, passed before us in triumph! How thrilling it is to see their footprints on this road we find so hard and strange — to realize that the temptations with which we wrestle from day to day are all set down in the Confessions of Augustine or the Journal of Wesley — that the new peace we gain when we make the great surrender is the story of Luther. What resources for reinforcement and inspiration lie at hand for our using in a closer fellowship with these leaders and emancipators of the soul, these friends and aiders of those who would live in the spirit. They were great souls, they fought great battles, they saw into greater depths, and it will put new heart into us to come into closer intimacy with their vivid and aspiring lives. Aye, and others unknown to the great world have walked with us betimes, and in death stand revealed —

"Saints of every day, like many another,
They lived and loved and strove to bless —
Friend, the sister, the unselfish mother
Whose aim was holiness.
I muse upon their virtues and remember
Their lives of charity and faithfulness
And, once again, take courage to go forward
My world to love and bless."

Not all can be great and famous, not all can sway the world with eloquence, but all can be pure of heart, faithful to duty, heroic in trial — victors by the grace of Him who is King of Saints, by whom all souls are called to be saints of the Most High, whose we are, in whom we live, and in the service of whose wise will there is peace.

XIV

THE GREAT CONFIDENCE

"I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor anything else in all creation shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ."—*Rom.* 8:38, 39.

IF we had never read this text before, and had no clue at all as to who wrote it, what would be the first question in our minds? No one would doubt that it was the utterance of some deeply religious soul; but most of us would fall to wondering what the life of the writer must have been to allow him to have and to hold a faith so absolute, so joyous, so triumphant. Some would say that he must have lived a sheltered life, secluded from untoward happenings, ever to have kept such a faith intact.

But this is no fragment of unknown authorship, and its writer was a man about whose life, both inner and outer, we have detailed information from his own pen. Nor was the life of St. Paul placid, sheltered, or unexciting. Instead, it was a thing of tempest, of conflict, of struggle against many odds, full of griefs and dangers, of heartache and almost heartbreak. Everywhere in his letters he tells of storm and stress, of toil and

travail, of labor and sorrow, of sickness and anguish. Yet he made bold to glory in his tribulations, and was more than victor through a faith that kept him as truly as he kept it.

Just so with the life of George Matheson, whose lyric of love and life everlasting is our theme today. Fiery and daring of soul, his history is the story of a heavy handicap, of terrible trial of faith, of heroic struggle for light in the dark. Born in a home of poverty and sweet piety, when he was yet a child his mother made the discovery that his vision was defective. For a time, by the aid of powerful glasses and large type, he was able to study. When he went to the Glasgow college his sisters went with him, lending him their eyes, and learning Latin, Greek and Hebrew to help him. Despite his trammels he won high honors, especially in philosophy, and he betrayed very early his wonderful gift of style in essays unique for their delicacy and beauty. Still the darkness deepened, albeit with occasional luminous breaks in it.

Stevenson, Watson, and Drummond were among his school fellows, and all of them admired his intellect and his heroic gaiety of heart. He used to walk eight miles to meet his mother, who brought him sweetmeats from home, and once took a lad with him who was very neatly dressed. His mother saw the contrast, and wept. Whereupon George said, " Never mind, mother; I have no fine tie like the laddie, but I have all the prizes they

had to give;" and he poured them into her lap. The angels of ancestry and the Spirit of God called Matheson to the ministry; but he had some difficulty in securing a parish, for he was now almost blind. At last he was called to Innellan on the Clyde, though it is of record that a large minority objected and made protest.

Slowly the darkness deepened, and at the opening of his ministry he had to face the appalling fact that he was hopelessly handicapped in the very faculty which gives access to the world of knowledge. Think of what that meant to one who had the power of genius and the high ambitions of a scholar — a poet-soul to whom the glint of sunlight on flowing waters, and the mists trailing over the hills, were heavenly visions! Still the shadow thickened until the curtain fell, shutting out forever all the beauty and color of the world. Then he knew what was in the heart of Milton when he sobbed:

"Dark, dark, irrevocably dark!"

Stone blind at twenty-two! Night descended while it was yet morning — what a fate to fall upon a young man!

Only a handful of cotters greeted him at Innellan, and his sermons, seldom more than twenty minutes long, were gems, perfect in form, in diction, in delivery. But they lacked power. One who heard him said: "As a man he was fine, but

his preaching was only nominal,"— which, alas, is only too true of most of our sermons. It was a time of spiritual unrest, of deep anxiety of soul, when science was crass and faith stood abashed. Matheson was caught in that terrible crash, and his temple of faith became a mass of ruins — doubt adding its horror to darkness. Indeed, he became an absolute atheist for a time, believing neither in God nor in immortality. Almost the only book he could read was the tragedy of Job, and the deep and awful questions which it raises were never absent from his mind. But he was no blatant atheist. Who can be who has the heart of a man? And it was at this time, just as he was making ready to leave the pulpit, that he wrote his hymn:

> "O Love that wilt not let me go,
> I rest my weary soul in Thee;
> I give Thee back the life I owe,
> That in Thine ocean-depths its flow
> May richer, fuller be."

"My hymn was composed," he afterwards told in the few restrained words he ever said about it, "in the manse of Innellan on the evening of June 6th, 1882. I was at that time alone. Something had happened to me which was known only to myself, and which caused me the most severe mental suffering. The hymn was the fruit of that suffering. I had the impression rather of having it dictated to me by some inward voice than of work-

ing it out myself. I am quite sure that the whole work was completed in five minutes, and equally sure that it never received at my hands any retouching or correction."

It is indeed strange: here was a rank atheist writing one of the loftiest of all lyrics in praise of the Love of God. How can such things be? What happened in those five minutes? Surely it must be plain that atheism does not end the matter, but may be, and *should* be, a discovery of the *real* basis of faith. Atheism, as Tolstoi learned, is an ultimate evidence of God. If there were no God, we should not even think about Him, much less deny Him. Whom do we deny? Whence the idea of God at all? Matheson had let go of God, had let go of everything, in fact — but he felt in his heart the tug of *Something that would not let go of him.* What was it? Why did he take that tug to be a token of love? Because Love is the one thing, the only thing, that never lets go, never gives up, never fails! Even in our poor humanity, the love of a mother tells us this truth.

Here, then, is the real basis of faith — not only that we believe in God, but also, and far more, that He believes in us. Our love of Him may fade and grow dim amid the dark facts of life; but His love never fades. Others have sung of the tenderness of Divine love; Matheson sings of its tenacity. Surely this is the assurance we supremely want, and which alone can satisfy us. Our hope

rests, not upon our hold upon God, which may any moment fail, but upon His hold upon us, which cannot fail. The tie between God and man is infinitely elastic, but it is infinitely strong. We may go far, doubt Him and defy Him indefinitely, but that tie will never break. It is as if He said:

"Rebel against Me; turn from Me and go your own way, and discover how unprofitable it is; deny me in theory or in practice, and fare accordingly — but one thing you cannot make Me do, and that is to make Me deny you and let you go. To all eternity you are Mine. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness I will draw you."

Truly, man may resist God for long — how long, no one knows — but in the end the mighty Love of God will have its way, conquering our doubt, our indifference, and our sin. Self-will may go a great distance, even into a far country, with heart-soreness and woe for its reward — but the will of God must triumph. Divine defeat is impossible; His love claims us, it holds us; it is the ocean of which our little lives are inlets. He will not let us go — that is our confidence in dark and lonely times, when all the billows rush over us, sweeping us away. He will not let go — that is our redemption in the bitter hour when conscience convicts us of sin and disobedience; and we have no heart left in us.

"And though we turn us from Thy face,
And wander far and long,
Thou hold'st us still in Thine embrace,
O love of God, most strong!"

Upon this deepest of all realities the poet rested his weary soul, and found the peace of a great joy. Here was no easy acquiescence, dying away in sighs of hopeless resignation. No; he fought his fate in rebel mood, and by fighting the will of God learned what that will was — learned that God does not wish to break our wills, but to make them. Wisely he accepted the inevitable as a token of the Divine will, and conquered by submission. Not only conquered, but found a ray of light in the dark night of the soul:

"O Light that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to Thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in Thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be."

Newman called us to follow a Kindly Light o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent; but here is a Light that follows us. Last summer on the lake, as our boat sped along, the moon made a path of rippling light behind — and it followed us all the way. Even so, goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives, until we come to the house of the Lord. Youth is self-confident and self-sufficient, and it is well that it should be so, else it would lack initiative. But he is no wise man who, having lived to middle age, does not

know "that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." We plan and scheme, counsel and contrive — yet how foolish is our wisdom, and how short a way we can see ahead. One step is enough, and the light shining from behind us shows us the way to the next duty — happy are we if we walk in it.

With the third stanza of the hymn the music deepens, and we feel that we are listening to sacred secrets of which mortals hardly dare speak. Every line of this song is noble poetry, charged with tenderness and courage; but here are words which dazzle by their very depth and wonder:

> "O Joy that seekest me through pain,
> I cannot close my heart to Thee;"

lines the truth of which is testified to by the great sufferers of the world. What can it mean? Have we misread the meaning of pain entirely? Is it possible that through all the woe of life a strange, ineffable joy is trying to find its way to us? Yes, it is true, and the lives of great sufferers confirm it, and most of all the lone Sufferer who endured the shame for the joy set before Him:

> "O Cross that liftest up my head,
> I dare not ask to fly from Thee."

Consider now the fruit of this faith in the life of the poet-preacher. First of all, it made him divinely tolerant of all forms of faith, and he was wont to say that if all the heretics who have been

burned at the stake were alive to-day, and each in charge of a church, nothing would give him greater joy than to preach for each in turn. The only condition he would make, he said, would be that he might have liberty to tell of the Love of God as he had found it. His preaching became more and more as the waving of a wand of power. The effect of it grew to be such that those who listened were transformed into a single person, to whom the preacher spoke soul to soul — one broad lake, as it were, to which the heart of the preacher communicated itself, now in ripples, now in waves.

Such a preacher could not long remain unknown. Soon we find him pastor of a great church in Edinburgh, and for thirteen years he was the shepherd of two thousand souls — a blind man leading a host out of shadows into Light! The note of his gospel was gladness. Despite his infirmities, there grew in his heart the crowning flower of joy. It was a kind of glee, contagious and captivating — a gaiety, as of one who has found a great secret and could not keep it. He was radiantly happy. After more than a decade of arduous, joyous labor, his fame growing every day, he retired to devote himself to literary work. And such books, so full of sweetness, and light, chief among them his "Studies of the Portrait of Christ!" His little books of mystical meditations are gems, each one made up of page-long essays; as, for example:

"There is a difference between love and duty. Duty has a sense of merit; love has none. Duty has always the feeling that it has done very well; love never admits that it has come up to the mark. Whence this humility of love compared with duty? Is not love the higher of the two? Yes. Duty is talent; love is genius. But why should genius be more humble than talent? Because it really has less trouble. Genius does what it must; talent does what it can. Therefore is talent more conceited than genius; it is more conscious of its labor because it really has more labor. Love is the genius of the heart. It does its work because it cannot help it — not because it ought, but because it must. That is why it repudiates merit. That is why it 'is not puffed up.'"

How simple it is, how lucid, how sure the insight — and that is only one of many pages of like beauty and charm. Of all writers of the last forty years none has dwelt so lovingly, so victoriously, on the theme of immortality. No one, perhaps, since George Macdonald, has declared so triumphant an assurance of the future life. He was utterly without doubt as regards the life after death. *Love will not let us go* — that much he knew, and that truth transfigured life and death, and all the dark depths beyond. What a ministry in a world so full of griefs and graves!

What a life to live, showing by heroic example that in each condition there is a divine spring of

help, and that, however terrible the calamity may be, it is possible to so alter ourselves, by the grace of God, as to make it an aid and not a hindrance in the progress of the spirit. His contest was not passive; it was a victory of power. What seemed to others wounds and fetters, he transformed into strength and gladness and freedom. When he was buried, at the side of the grave stood a huge floral emblem — a square of white flowers, in the center of which the last lines of this hymn were spelled out in red rose-buds:

> "And from the ground there blossoms red
> Life that shall endless be."

XV

THE VISION OF THE DEAD

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened."—*Rev.* 20: 12.

THE Apocalypse of St. John, said Milton, is the majestic image of a high and stately tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn scenes and acts with a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies. It is a Book of Vision, forecasting, in forms now vague, now terrible, now unspeakably grand and lovely, the final issues of the life of man and the world. Far beyond the shadows of time and death and sin, it foresees, with a triumphant and all transfiguring faith, the ultimate victory of the right and the overthrow of evil — a new earth overarched by a new heaven, and the City of God descending. It is the vision of a Christian seer who, amid the tragedies of earth and the overturnings of history, appeals to the high court of eternal Judgment.

St. John lived to be ninety years of age, and is said to have been the only one of the Apostles who did not wear the crown of martyrdom. Despite his infirmities, as life deepened into twilight, and

he looked upon the world in the light of the life of Jesus, seen through the sunset air of memory and hope, his Gospel became so simple that he was wont to sum it all up in a sentence, oft repeated as they carried him about on a cot: "Little children, love one another!" That was the heart of his Christian faith, the whole of it, and on the lonely isle of Patmos it brightened into a vision so radiant that the dark earth seemed a shadowy phantom and heaven the supreme reality. With what clear insight Browning reads this vision in the "Death in the Desert," showing how the seer, with his bright dying eyes, foresaw all the subtle attacks on the faith of his Master, and won our battles before they were fought. As Hugo said, here we touch that sombre portal that leads toward God Himself; some one seems to push us from behind, and the dread entrance, in vague outline, rouses mingled terror and longing.

Now, consider the dignity of this vision, its vastness, its inconceivable solemnity, its exquisite and noble reserve. Here is no shallow optimism shouting itself hoarse about certainties whereof no man knoweth, while it has no rebuke for present rampant iniquity; no facile and curious imagination making a map of heaven and hell. It sets no dates. It indulges in no glib dogmatism. It does not overlook the awful law of retribution, here and hereafter. No; behind it beats a mighty passion for righteousness, a profound concern for man, a

sense of the tragedy of his history and a longing wonder as to what becomes of him after death. It is no idle speculation, but a vision vouchsafed to a great soldier of righteousness, who, in the stress of moral conflict and the sorrow of seeming defeat, is permitted to behold the issue — as, later when Rome was reeling to its ruin, Augustine took refuge in that same City of God. It is always so. In the darkest periods of history, in its most desperate crises, there is some God-illumined, prophetic soul who sees beyond the shadows, as Tolstoi, in our own day, foresaw the tragedy of world-war, but looked beyond it and beheld the dim figure of a great Teacher of Faith rising out of the soul of Slavic peoples, and calling the world back to the life of the Spirit.

Reverently let us study this vision of the innumerable dead, whose exodus from earth began with the morning of time and continues day by day, night by night, and in this year of blood has become multitudinous and overwhelming. Tenderly, pensively, one also of our own poets broods in his "Thanatopsis" over the earth as a mighty sepulchre, and bids us have no fear to lie down in its bosom, since we retire not alone, but in the silent company of patriarchs of the infant world, with kings and peasants, with hoary sages of ages past, with the fair forms of matron and babe, aye, with the good and wise, the wicked and the foolish, of every land. The moon in her dark journeying,

and all the infinite host of heaven, are shining on "the sad abodes of death, through the still lapse of ages," until the friendly earth seems to the poet one vast cemetery, nor could we wish for couch more magnificent!

> "The hills
> Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun; the vales
> Stretching in pensive quietness between;
> The venerable woods; rivers that move
> In majesty, and the complaining brooks
> That make the meadow green; and poured round all,
> Old Ocean's gray and melancholy waste —
> Are but the solemn decorations all
> Of the great tomb of man. . . . All that tread
> The globe are but a handful to the tribes
> That slumber in its bosom."

But our Christian seer, rising above this vast shadow that hovers over the earth, sees those whom men call the dead standing before God — past kneeling, past praying, erect and still, awaiting His judgment. How natural that one who walked with Jesus should see, first of all, not the great of earth, not the mountain peaks of humanity, not the few elect souls of valor and intelligence, but the little ones whom the world forgets and only God remembers. How full of tenderness and humanity, how infinitely dear this text is to those in whose homes the child-voice is only an echo, and whose hearts have been broken over little folded hands! Half the human race die in infancy, and if the number of darkened homes in one age is uncountable, the sum of them

in all ages, since the wild cry of the first mother over the first dead child, is overwhelming. What is the fate of these little ones who came and looked, with eyes of wonder and trust, into a few fond faces, and vanished? Speechless they came and speechless they went; they had no language but a cry. They were forbidden to go on here; are they forbidden to go on elsewhere, annihilated without opportunity, and cast as rubbish in the void? This Christian vision of the dead says, No! If they have no history, they have an endless opportunity in the love of God whose they are and in whose presence they stand.

When on an ocean voyage a poor stoker dies, at once and without ceremony of any kind "his heavy-shotted hammock-shroud drops into a vast and wandering grave," and he is a symbol of a great majority of the race. While they live they are hardly counted, and when they die nothing stops. The big world, like the ocean liner, does not even slacken its speed. Yet these multitudes, of whom the world takes so little note, do the hard work of the world, and their service is inconceivably great. Obscure, nameless, unknown, as Lincoln said, God must love them else He would not have made so many of them. Those who talk so glibly about the survival of the fittest only betray their brutal, snobbish egotism, for they assume that they are among the fit. Whereas the Cosmic Spirit, always alert, unerringly detects their

vanity and atheism lurking under it. But the Christian vision, like Him who inspired it, reckons no soul insignificant for lack of position, education or even character, and no soul great save in its fellowship with the Eternal Soul.

Think, too, of the uncountable multitudes, like the sands of the sea for number, who have walked lightly or sadly upon this earth in the ages before us. What of them? Of the fifteen hundred million inhabitants of this globe to-day, how few can be called great, how few are known, how few signify; yet they are but a drop in the bucket beside the millions who lived in ages agone, long since forgotten and fallen into dust. Think of the hordes that battered down Rome, of the teeming throngs of Carthage, of Babylon, of Egypt, and farther on back beyond recorded time to the swarming and suffering populations who prepared the way for the great historic enterprise. If you look still further, your vision is lost in barbaric clans and groups of roving savages, and when your mind sweeps the whole field of time the total of humanity since man appeared is bewildering. Who can look back down the long highway of time without gratitude and pity for those nameless millions upon whose labors and achievements the later civilizations rest?

Now, reflect on the problem which those millions, as numerous as clouds of insects in the summer air, present to the Christian thinker. If we

follow those who say that they are not immortal, by the same stroke we cut the ground from beneath our own hope and consign the race to dust. As Lincoln said, "it is either all or none." To be indifferent to those forerunners of our civilization betrays a lack of humanity, to say nothing of a Christian concern for man. Admit that the farther back we go the noble lives become fewer, and the moral failures more general. Even to-day the race is largely in sin, and the number of those who share the highest life of the world, its science, its art, its philosophy, its best faith, is very small. If they are unfit for moral bliss, they are surely too many for doom. Those who seem willing to admit the possibility, if not the fact, of such a colossal Divine failure, shatter the citadel of all religious faith. In the light of that vision of all the mighty dead standing before God, how dare any man go "dealing damnation round the land" in the name of a petty dogma, and glibly passing sentence on the human race? How blasphemous beyond words! No, no. Let us not turn pessimists and despair of the overwhelming majority of our humanity with one scheme, nor rush them all into heaven with another. It is enough to have the veil lifted and behold them standing before God.

Surely all must see how vital it is, how necessary alike to our faith and sanity, that we have a noble vision of God, before whom not only the dead of

ages past, but our own dear, pitiful, august dead, must stand. Nature teaches us much about the law and power and majesty of God. History, now immeasurably extended by evolution, discloses yet deeper and more precious things, revealing His crusade for righteousness and His labor working toward a higher type of humanity. But these do not satisfy when we see, as in this vision, that white and silent assembly of all the dead before His throne. Here, in this high court of the dead, let us make trial, not of the dead, but of our ideas of Him in whose presence they stand. Take any of the modern notions of God, put forth with such smart logic, and test it in this light and you will see how thin and pale it is, how inadequate to the demands of humanity, how deaf to the most pathetic and moving of all cries that ascend from this shadowed earth to the shadowless heavens.

For example, let us read the text as Spencer would translate it: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed." Whose heart does not turn sick and sink within him to think of all the suffering, sinning, aspiring, pathetic humanity in the grasp of mere impersonal Energy, as if caught and crushed in a vast machine? Or let Bergson give his version of the text: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before a Vital Urge," a blundering life force groping its way in the dark, running into blind alleys — hu-

manity itself largely an experiment, if not a mistake! Who can hold that dogma against the protesting cry of helpless innocence and the infinite misery wrought by its blind and fumbling God? Let Matthew Arnold render the text: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before a stream of tendency, a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness." That is a little better, in that it adds to mere power a gleam of conscience, a dim prophecy of moral responsibility, a faint hope that right will somewhere rule at last. But not one of these guesses measures up to the problem. How dare we bring a mere hypothesis, or an arid rationalism, to the judgment of all the dead?

Happily our Christian seer, whose far-shining vision casts our groping guesses into shadow, brings to the solemn assize of the dead not only a passionate human heart, but a grand revelation of God. Only when we know the ineffable fatherhood of God, as unveiled in the life and spirit and living presence of Christ, do we have a vision of God equal to this vision of the dead. Ah, when we see that God is like Christ, there is light all round the sky, transfiguring all our mortal life from the cradle to the tomb — and beyond! Then the wild fondness of the suffering motherhood of the world, with its cry after lost little ones since ever the Pyramids were built, finds response in the words, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Then

the piteous moral failure of humanity, so tragic in its weakness, so staggering in its aggregate, is in the hands of One who knows all, as no mortal can know it, who remembers that we are dust, and who knows how to be merciful and just. He who taught us to forgive until seventy times seven, will not forget the possibilities of growth in His poorest human child, nor will His love let go of the most far-wandering soul made in His image. The dead are in the hands of God whom Jesus made known, and there we may leave them, knowing that we shall soon stand in that company to be judged according to the deeds done in the body.

Retribution there is; retribution there will be, here and hereafter; but if it is Divine it is neither vindictive nor hopeless. The judgments of eternal love are not the judgments of doom, but of redemption, as our nobler human judgment comes more and more to be. He who made us for Himself knows that unrighteousness is our woe, here and everywhere, and that righteousness is our infinite joy. If we cannot forecast the ultimate issue, we can at least be sure that a redemptive intention is at the heart of all the moral pain of humanity, and as surely affirm that the infinite pain that throbs in the heart of our race will never cease until that heart is pure. Of all the mysteries amidst which we are encamped in this "isthmus of a middle state" none is so strange, so inexplicable, as that of pain, which increases in intensity,

as the saints tell us, the nearer we come to God. Nor does it cease until we attain to the heavenly death — that death, that is, of all that is unheavenly within us — when it is lost in that joy which all the world is seeking, but which so few have found upon earth.

Such a vision of the dead fills one with awe unutterable, and it well may hush our petty debates about the fate of that host assembled before God. If any one insists upon a literal and austere reading of the Book of Vision, let him not crucify humanity on a few texts, but begin at home and make trial of his exegesis on those nearest to his heart. The Judgment Parables of Jesus should be read by a father, with his family gathered about his knee, and in that scene, with its tenderness and beauty, he will best understand the infinite Father at whose feet all will assemble at last. In those parables it is not penitence, but a beautiful, unconscious possession of moral worth and the spirit of service, that is the basis of high reward. Nothing is said about belief, about belonging to a church, but only about deeds that find their fruit in character and a faithful pilgrimage in "the Road of the Loving Heart." Those who are most sure that they are worthy to stand in that awful hour learn that they are the most unfit, while others whom they had deemed outcasts receive blessing. It was not Nero, but St. Paul, who felt himself most unworthy, as all the saints have confessed in

their sweet and wise humility, trusting only in the infinite mercy of God, as we must do here and always.

Above all, let us not be guilty of the unspeakable vanity of claiming for ourselves what we think is too good for all our humanity, lest we be found less worthy than the least. Let us dare to trust the highest hope our hearts can dream, and stand by it, without dogmatism and without doubt, the while we join with Faber in his hymn —

"There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty.

"For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."

THE END

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